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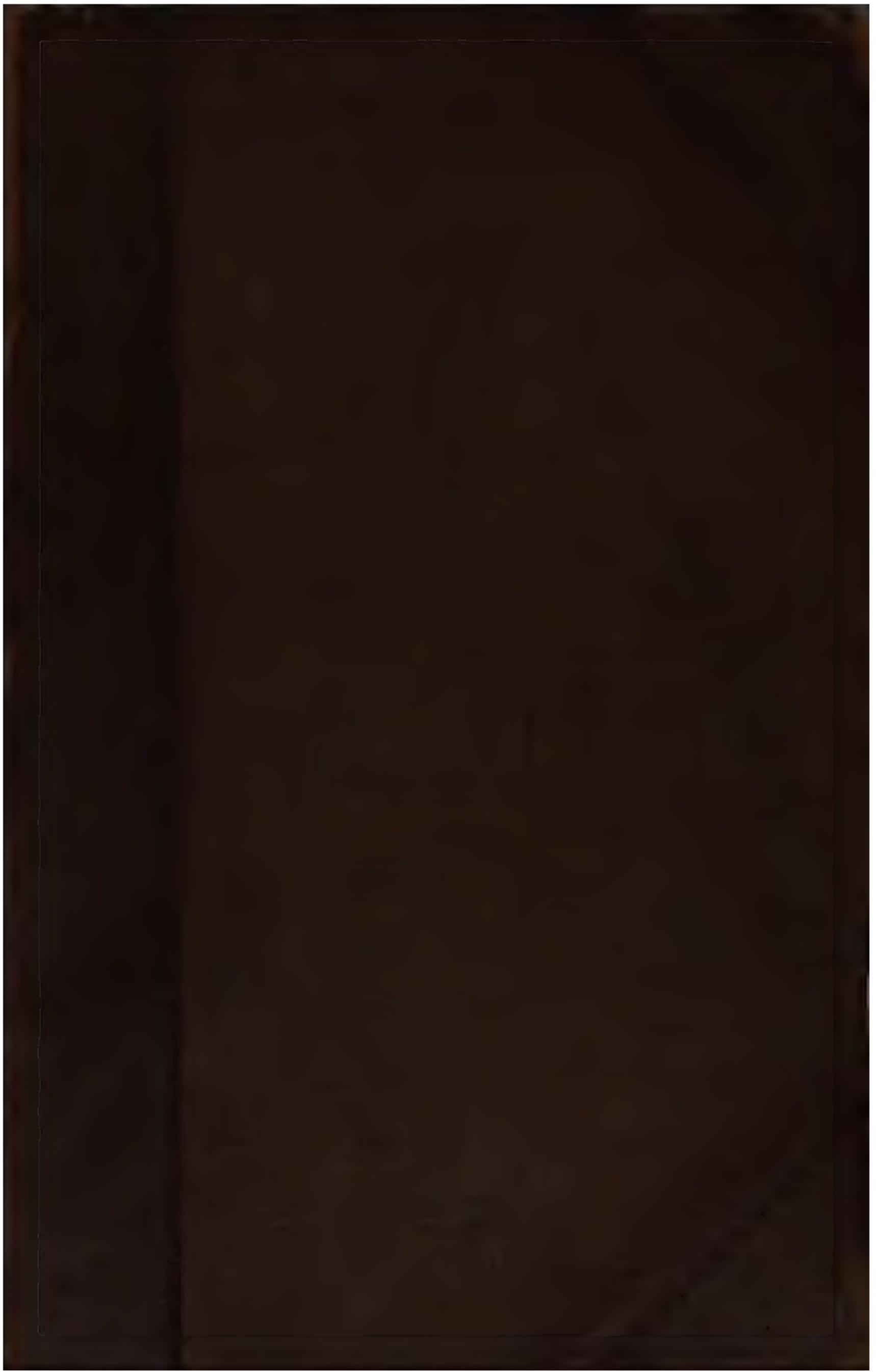
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THE  
CHURCH AND HER MINISTRATIONS:  
IN A SERIES  
OF  
DISCOURSES.

BY

RICHARD MANT, D. D.

BISHOP OF DOWN AND CONNOR.



" My Name is Christian, my Surname is Catholick. By the one I am known from Infidels, by the other from Hereticks and Schismaticks."—PACIAN, *Epist. ad Sempron.*

" For the Church of God! For the Church of God!"—ABP. WHITGIFT's *dying words.*

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**ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.**

TO

**THE QUEEN'S  
MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.**

---

**MADAM,**

A SERIES of Discourses on “The Church and her Ministriations” may be judged to appear with peculiar propriety under the auspices of one, whom the Church loyally recognises as her supreme Governor under God, and to whom, under God, she confidently looks for maintaining her in “the true profession of the Gospel, and the Protestant reformed religion established by the law.” Permission therefore has been humbly sought, and is now gratefully acknowledged, and dutifully used, for inscribing this Volume to your Majesty.

Nursed as you have been, Madam, in the

bosom of the Church, and trained up in familiarity with her devotional formularies, your Majesty cannot but be alive to those qualities, which, independently of any special engagement on the part of the Sovereign, particularly recommend her to the Sovereign's good will and protection : such are her sense of the origin of all human government, especially of the royal authority, in the ordinance of God ; her reverential and undivided allegiance to her temporal Governour, second only to her submission to God and the laws ; her vows of faithful service, honour, and humble obedience in God to that Governour ; and her encouragement of all her members to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

Your Majesty, however, will here allow me to observe, that in the following Discourses the Church is considered, less as a part of the Constitution of this Kingdom, than as God's authorized dispenser of His means of grace and salvation. This distinction is apt to be overlooked by those who imagine, that, being by law established, she principally on that account lays claim to the people's respect and regard. But, whatever claim she

may derive from her legal establishment, your Majesty is aware that this is far, very far indeed, from conferring her principal and most powerful claim. Her intrinsick value is independent of the State. The Church of Christ is of God's creation : and the Anglican Church, being a true part of the Church of Christ, whether established by law or not, is essentially the same. The State cannot make a Church, which God has not made; nor can it unmake one, which God has made. The most that the State can do, in settling a national religion, is to associate itself with a true part of Christ's Church. Still in whatever degree such association may recommend the Church to the people, her chief and proper claim is derived from her own character, as a true part of the Church of Christ, and as thus ordained and constituted by God. Nor would that claim be abated, should the State choose to discontinue the association.

Under this character, Madam, most of all, I venture to say that the Church should be contemplated, and her pretensions put forward and maintained. Accordingly the following Dis-

courses were formerly preached at sundry times, and are now collected and published, for the purpose of exhibiting, under various aspects, her religious claims to the veneration and affection of the people of this Kingdom, and of thereby encouraging a reasonable and conscientious, a continual and undeviating, attachment to her communion.

For it is by such means as these; Madam, that as the intrinsick character and the proper claims of the Church are to be set forth, so a foundation is to be laid for a firm and enduring attachment to her. He, who from a mere regard to her connection with the State, should attach himself to her communion, would on the failure of such an inducement be prone to think scorn of her, and to fall away. Not so those better instructed and consistent children of the Church, whose affection is based upon a conviction of the conformity of her constitution and provisions to the will and word of God. Of persons such as these the attachment would be equally firm and enduring, under any change and variety of her worldly circumstances, for better or for worse: though the authority of

her native Episcopacy should be again suffered by the State to be usurped by a foreign Hierarch, or to be set at nought and trodden under foot by a host of sectarian innovators ; and though her Liturgy, the matured fruit of the collective piety and wisdom of her venerable Reformers, should be by the State again compelled to make way for the missal of Romish superstition and idolatry, or for the meagre and latitudinarian directory of the disciples of Geneva.

It has pleased God, Madam, in his wisdom, to dispense evil as well as good to the Anglican Reformed Church. With lively gratitude we bear in mind the prosperous days of her deliverance from Romish corruption, and of her establishment in primitive purity, during the reign of King Edward the Sixth, of blessed memory ; of her re-establishment under the patronage of that great Nursing-mother of the Church, your Majesty's most illustrious predecessor, Queen Elizabeth, and her continued peace under the fostering care of the succeeding well-learned and discriminating Monarch ; and, again, of her restoration, together with the Crown, in whose profanation and downfal

she had partaken, to her rightful eminence and dignity in a later age. But with these, her days of prosperity, have alternated days of suffering : first, when her protestant faith was attempted to be exterminated by the fires of papal persecution ; and her holy martyrs, calumniated, reviled, impoverished, disgraced, degraded, were delivered over to the secular power, to bear testimony to the truth by their blood : and again, when her apostolical polity was abolished by schismatical violence, and superseded by new devices of man's invention ; when her divinely-commissioned ministers were despoiled of their property and banished from their homes ; and her scriptural forms of worship were prohibited with a penalty of mulct and imprisonment, even under the shelter of obscurity, and in the privacy of domestick seclusion : and again, when arbitrary power, in the person of a Popish Sovereign, again looked upon her with an evil eye, and gave a foretaste of its evil purposes by dispensing with the laws enacted for her safeguard ; and visiting her spiritual fathers, who refused to be the matricidal instruments of his tyranny, with charges of disloyalty and sedition,

with actual imprisonment, with an oppressive prosecution as criminals, and with menaces of ulterior punishment.

Through such alternations, Madam, of secular elevation and depression, of temporal joy and mourning, our National Church has passed, and may haply pass again. For it is no unreasonable anticipation, that, blessed as she has for the most part been since her last deliverance, and under the rule of your Majesty's august family, with peace and prosperity, she may at no distant period by God's inscrutable providence be called upon to suffer another trial of affliction, when "the hedge of his vine shall again be broken down, so that all they who go by may pluck off her grapes; that the wild boar out of the wood may root it out, and the wild beast of the field devour it."

Still in every variety of outward circumstances, Madam, the spiritual character of the Church, and her spiritual claims, have at all times remained, and do and will remain, the same. And, as she has experienced heretofore, so by God's continued blessing she will doubtless again experience, in the severest trials, the hearty affection and the

strong attachment of her faithful children : of those who estimate her value, and judge of her pretensions, not from regard to any external transitory accidents of worldly honour or dishonour, of secular good or evil ; but from a contemplation of her essential excellence, resulting from the Apostolical, Primitive, and Catholick character by God's mercy impressed upon her, and attested by her Polity, her Doctrines, the Commission of her Ministers, her dispensation of the Sacraments, and her Forms of Divine Worship.

These, then, Madam, are the topicks, to which attention is directed in the following pages ; with the humble hope, that they may by the Divine blessing contribute to strengthen those, who shall peruse them, in attachment to the Church, as God's appointed instrument of their own salvation ; and by natural consequence to make them solicitous for her maintenance, in her character of the Church established by law in this Kingdom, as the most efficacious means for promoting true Christianity, and the happiness therewith associated, in their countrymen at large.

To be, under God, the guardian of such a Church

is an honour, Madam, and a blessing, more precious than any other attribute of the Crown, which by God's will is about to be placed on your Majesty's head.

That your Majesty may be long preserved by God's good providence to exercise your royal prerogative in the protection, the encouragement, and the advancement of this true member of his universal Church ; and that you may personally derive from your communion in her spiritual ministrations all those benefits, which she is God's ordinance for conferring ; is the earnest wish and prayer of no one of her members more than of him, who intreats your Majesty's gracious permission to be accounted,

Madam,

Your Majesty's  
Most dutiful and most devoted  
subject and servant,

RD. DOWN and CONNOR.



## TO THE READER.

---

FOR discharging my duty in the pulpit, as a Minister of the United Church of England and Ireland, it has been one object of my endeavour, in obedience to my ordination vow, to "teach the people committed to my cure and charge with all diligence to keep and observe the doctrine and sacraments and the discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church and Realm hath received the same according to the commandments of God." And I have accordingly taken all convenient occasions for bringing forward in my Discourses the character, the principles, and the provisions of the national Church, and showing their agreement with the word of God in holy Scripture. That which I have thus done myself, I have frequently pressed on the Clergy of my diocese as a part of their duty likewise. And, in pursuance of the same obligation, it has of late occurred to me, that a series of printed Discourses on those subjects might be further instrumental in

conveying such instruction to those who are “ committed to my cure and charge ;” that it would at the same time, among the various theological productions of the day, bear somewhat of a distinctive if not of a novel character ; and might, from the actual state of men’s minds on religious topicks, as well as on account of the inherent importance of the subjects themselves, prove an acceptable and, by God’s blessing, an useful publication. My respectable publishers having concurred in this latter opinion, the result is the present volume, of the several contents of which I request the reader’s permission to add a brief exposition.

In the first two Discourses the character of the *National Church* is upheld, as *a true part of the Visible Church of Christ*: the former being employed in setting forth the marks of Christ’s Church, and in showing their existence in our part of it ; the latter in stating and controverting the principal Romish objections to this character. These two Discourses were at first combined in a single Sermon, which was preached in St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin, in 1829, before his Excellency, the Duke of Northumberland, Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, President, and the Members of the “ Association incorporated for discountenancing Vice and promoting the knowledge and practice of the Christian Religion :” and was then published in obedience to their collective vote. The passages,

which connected the argument of the sermon with the particular occasion of its delivery, have been now omitted, as foreign from the object of the present publication; as well as numerous extracts from ecclesiastical writers, which were appended in justification or explanation of various positions in the sermon, but of which the introduction at the present time appears not necessary, and might be inconvenient.

The third Discourse is intended to show the *conformity of our national Church in principles and practices with the primitive Church of Christ*, on a general view of doctrine, Church-government, the sacraments, and Divine worship in each. This sermon, together with the fourteenth in the present series, from each of which mention of the circumstances attending its delivery is omitted, was published by request in 1821, having been both preached for the benefit of certain parochial and national schools in London and its neighbourhood.

The substance of the fourth Discourse is taken from a charge delivered to the Clergy of my diocese in 1836, and put out in its present form in compliance with a suggestion of its probable usefulness in this form. It is intended to show how the *Church is distinguished from other protestant professors of Christianity*.

The conformity of ours with the primitive

Church, stated generally in the third, is more particularly set forth in the succeeding Discourses: the *Church's judgment on the "necessity of holding the Catholick Faith,"* being maintained on the highest authority in the fifth and sixth Discourses, the former of which was preached at the Anniversary meeting of the Charity Schools in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, in 1825, at the request of the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, and afterwards published by them with their annual report. In this also have now been made such alterations, as were judged requisite for adapting it to the purpose of a Sermon for general use, rather than of an occasional Discourse.

The seventh and eighth Discourses take up the subject of the ministerial commission, and are engaged first in proving the *Divine commission of the Ministers of the national Church,* and then in discriminating between *the minister's official acts and his personal character,* the former being contended to be valid by virtue of his commission, notwithstanding defects in the latter. To these is added an Address, occasionally delivered to *candidates for holy orders,* containing a brief exposition of the *questions* put to them by the Church, and of the *answers* demanded of them. I have been induced to insert this address, though in form and manner varying from the Discourses with which it is connected, partly because I hope that with God's

blessing it may on perusal be beneficial to candidates for our sacred profession, as I have some reason to trust that it has been on delivery; and partly because I would fain invite the attention of any lay member of the Church, into whose hands these Discourses may fall, to her anxious care for securing the faithfulness of her ministers.

The four next Discourses relate to the Sacraments of Christ, and other provisions of the Church connected therewith: the tenth and the thirteenth being occupied about *the ministration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper*, which are treated of rather practically than doctrinally; and the eleventh and twelfth being devoted to the *Catechism* and *Confirmation*. Of these the eleventh having been originally composed and several times delivered, for the purpose of recommending Church of England schools on the ground of their giving a Church of England education, as conveyed chiefly by the Church Catechism, the connexion has been thought desirable to be still preserved. And as to the twelfth, I have seen no sufficient reason for taking it out of the form in which it has been used; namely, not of an ordinary Discourse from the pulpit, but of a special address to Candidates before their Confirmation.

The six following Discourses relate to the

Church's provisions for Divine service. The first of these, namely the fourteenth of the series, gives a general view of her *ordinary service*, showing its *primitive character and its reasonableness*. The fifteenth sets forth the primary importance of *prayer*, the value of a *Liturgy*, and the excellence of our *Book of Common Prayer*, as formed on the Apostolical model. In the sixteenth is stated and enforced the *office of the people in the publick worship of the Church*. This was preached in a parish church of my diocese in 1825; and then published with a special view to its distribution among the members of the Church within my charge. The duty of being present before the *beginning of the service* is insisted on in the seventeenth. In the eighteenth is sketched the scriptural *history of Psalmody*, which is followed by some directions for the *proper practice* of that department of Divine worship. And in the nineteenth an opportunity is taken for placing in a proper light a particular service of the Church, which is rarely used indeed, but, being not well understood, and much calumniated, seems to need explanation; for being properly understood it breathes the genuine spirit of piety and charity, of self humiliation and repentance. I allude to the *Commination*, which is in truth one of the finest and most unexceptionable compositions in our Book of Com-

mon Prayer, and requires only to be rightly apprehended, in order to being approved.

There remain two more Discourses, the subjects of which are the Church's *places of worship*: in the twentieth, *God's peculiar presence* in such places is asserted, and some remarks are offered on the *conduct* which becomes us in consequence thereof. In the twenty-first are contained observations on the *practice*, which has at all times prevailed among the people of God, of *frequenting such places*, and on the *duty and pleasure* of attending them, as resulting from that practice, and from their proper uses.

Such are the subjects of the following Discourses. Each of them, unless the two first be considered an exception, was composed without any particular reference to the others, and is to be regarded therefore as an independent treatise on its own argument. At the same time connected as they are by a natural bond of relationship, they may perhaps in their present arrangement be not unfitly described as "a Series on the Church and her ministrations." In conclusion, whilst I beseech a blessing on them for the reader's edification, I heartily thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, that IN THE CHURCH, and BY HER MINISTRATIONS, (and why should not the same be said of her venerable Sister, that true part of Christ's body under the Scottish episcopacy?) the

people of this kingdom are possessed of the same means of grace and salvation, which were enjoyed by the members of the primitive Church of Christ under the personal government of his Apostles.

RD. DOWN and CONNOR.

*Down and Connor House,  
January, 1838.*

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## DISCOURSE I.

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### THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND IRELAND A TRUE PART OF CHRIST'S VISIBLE CHURCH.

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Acts ii. 47.

And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.

THE Evangelist is here describing the effects consequent on the preaching of St. Peter, after the descent of the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost: and he concludes his description by affirming, that “the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved;” more correctly perhaps, “such as were saved,” or “the saved;” namely, those, who by being “added to the Church,” were made partakers of Christ’s salvation, which, commencing in this life, by saving men from their sins on earth, is perfected in the other life by the salvation of their souls in heaven. To these persons “the Church,” at its first institution, is here designated as the avenue of salva-

## 2 THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND IRELAND

tion. “And what was then daily done,” observes Bishop Pearson on the Creed, “hath been done since continually. Christ never appointed two ways to heaven: nor did He build a Church to save some, and make another institution for other men’s salvation. ‘There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,’ but the name of Jesus: and that name is no otherwise given under heaven than in the Church.” Agreeable to this are the frequent and plain assertions of the ancient fathers, that there is no salvation to be had out of Christ’s Holy Catholick Church; but that whosoever would be a member of the Church triumphant in heaven, must first be a member of the Church militant here on earth.

In pursuance of these observations, it is my purpose to take a view of the Church, as instituted by authority of its Divine Founder for man’s salvation; and thence to estimate the character of our national Church, the united Church of England and Ireland: a subject, I apprehend, of great importance in a general view; certainly not of less importance, by reason of the inattention, with which it is too commonly treated in the present day, and of the ignorance and misapprehension which too commonly prevail concerning it.

The Greek word “ecclesia,” which we render

"Church," denotes a congregation or society, "called out" from the world, and in consequence become the Lord's peculiar. The latter idea is conveyed by our word "Church," which properly signifies "belonging to the Lord," or "the Lord's house or family."

Limited in extent to the times of the Gospel, and to man's state of probation in this life :—for with the word in its application to times before the coming of Christ, or to the condition of the blessed spirits in heaven, our present discussion is not concerned :—but limited to the "Church of Christ militant here on earth," extending, nevertheless, over the whole of Christendom, and comprehending within it different particular Churches, this congregation or society of the Lord, this the Lord's house or family, is marked out in holy Scripture by several characteristicks. It is there represented as "the body of Christ," who is reciprocally "its head<sup>1</sup> :" as being "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone ; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord<sup>2</sup> :" as "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth<sup>3</sup> :" as "sanctified and cleansed by

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 12. 15. Col. i. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. ii. 20, 21.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 15.

Christ with the washing of water by the word<sup>1</sup> ; as being “one body,” but having “many members, all of whom are by one Spirit baptized into one body, and are all made to drink into one Spirit<sup>2</sup>;” and are all “one body,” by being “all partakers of one bread<sup>3</sup>. ” These things figuratively: whilst literally it is said of those, who were first incorporated into the Church, as we read in the passage just preceding my text, that “they who gladly received his word,” namely, the word of Peter, calling upon them to “repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, were baptized; and they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers<sup>4</sup>. ”

In these passages of Holy Writ, we discern several marks of the Church of Christ. These are drawn together and exhibited in a single view by the affirmation, which is made in our 19th Article of Religion, that “The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same:” and which is illustrated by the position in the 23d Article, that “It is not lawful

<sup>1</sup> Eph. v. 26.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 12.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. x. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Acts ii. 41, 42.

for any man to take upon him the office of publick preaching or ministering the sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men, who have publick authority given unto them in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vine-yard."

To much the same effect with these combined Articles is the description in the second part of our Homily for Whitsunday: "The true Church is an universal congregation or fellowship of God's faithful and elect people, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the head corner-stone. And it hath always three notes or marks, whereby it is known: pure and sound doctrine, the sacraments ministered according to Christ's holy institution, and the right use of ecclesiastical discipline. This description of the Church is agreeable both to the Scriptures of God, and also to the doctrine of the ancient fathers, so that none may justly find fault therewith."

I. And here the first thing to be observed, concerning the Church of Christ, is, that it is a "body of which Christ is the head :" our Article terms it "a congregation of faithful men ;" not a con-

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gregation in the confined sense of a particular assembly, according to its most usual modern acceptance ; but in the same extended sense, often borne by the Greek word “ecclesia,” to which, from contemporaneous authorities, it appears to have exactly answered, or “word for word,” as Dr. Nowell says : “an universal congregation or fellowship of God’s faithful and elect people,” as “the true Church” is defined to be, in the Homily : that is, in the language of Dr. Barrow, “The society of those, who at present, or in course of time, profess the faith and gospel of Christ, and undertake the evangelical covenant, in distinction to all other religions ; particularly to that of the Jews, which is called the synagogue :” or, as the same great divine elsewhere describes it, “That body of Christians, which, diffused over the world, retains the faith taught, the discipline settled, the practices appointed, by our Lord and His Apostles<sup>1</sup>.”

This universal congregation, fellowship, or society, however numerous be its members, forms only “one body,” united under “one head, even Christ :” however various be its parts, it constitutes only “one household,” of which “Jesus Christ Himself is the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord :” however large

<sup>1</sup> Works, i. 760, 466. folio.

it be and comprehensive, (for which reason, indeed, at no late period after its institution, it acquired the epithet of "catholick," or "universal," as embracing all the nations of the world,) it, nevertheless, contains only one kingdom under "one Lord." All the members of this society "name the name of Christ," as their Prince: and after His name they are themselves called Christians, as intimating their subjection to Him, after whose holy name they are thus called, for servants are known by their master's name<sup>1</sup>. And all they who walk according to this rule, "holding fast the name<sup>2</sup>," and acknowledging the dominion of Christ, however different they may be from each other in nation and language, yet in respect of their subjection to the "one Lord" of the Church, are truly members of that "one body," of which He is "the head."

II. But besides this Supreme Head, who is invisible, visible governors with delegated power are necessary in the Church. The notion of a society carries with it the notions of a government and governors: for without government a society cannot exist, and without governors government cannot be administered. Accordingly our Lord ordained the Apostles to be under Him the first

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 19.    <sup>2</sup> Isaiah lxv. 15.    <sup>3</sup> Rev. ii. 13.

governors of His Church : also He gave them authority to delegate the like office to others as their successors ; "as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you<sup>1</sup> :" and He promised to be with them, and with such their successors, for with themselves personally He could not be, "always, even unto the end of the world."<sup>2</sup>

In pursuance of this authority, the Apostles did appoint other persons to succeed them in the government of the Church. Among these, their own writings more particularly specify Timothy and Titus, and inform us of some of the powers with which they were invested for the due discharge of their high office. Thus Timothy was invested with the power of "commanding and teaching"<sup>3</sup> the whole Church of Ephesus, officers as well as private Christians : of exercising ecclesiastical jurisdiction, by providing for the due celebration of divine worship<sup>4</sup>, and repressing irregularities in the publick assemblies<sup>5</sup>; by charging the ministers of the Church to teach no other than the true doctrine<sup>6</sup>; by taking cognizance of accusations against elders or presbyters<sup>7</sup>; by inflicting censures corresponding to the offences proved against them, as a terror to others<sup>8</sup>; and by pro-

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 21.      <sup>2</sup> Matt. xxviii. 20.      <sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 11.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 1.      <sup>5</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12.      <sup>6</sup> 1 Tim. i. 3.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Tim. v. 19.      <sup>8</sup> 1 Tim. v. 20.

viding that the diligent and meritorious should receive proportionate honour<sup>1</sup>. He was also invested with the power of ordination; by committing the doctrine which he had received to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also<sup>2</sup>; by proving or examining those, who should be desirous of becoming subordinate ministers of the Church<sup>3</sup>; by laying hands on those whom he should judge properly qualified<sup>4</sup>; and of course rejecting others.

Similar powers were committed in the Churches of Crete to Titus, who was authorized to "set in order the things which St. Paul had left wanting"<sup>5</sup>: and accordingly he was empowered, on the one hand, to "teach" all degrees of men within his jurisdiction<sup>6</sup>; to "exhort and rebuke with all authority"<sup>7</sup>; to take cognizance of heretics, and reject from the communion of the Church such of them as did not repent on the second admonition<sup>8</sup>; and on the other hand, to ordain those whom he himself should approve, to be "elders in every city"<sup>9</sup> of that large and populous island.

These commissions to Timothy and Titus plainly import, that they were invested with the episcopal office, the peculiar functions of which they were thus empowered to discharge. And that they

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. v. 17.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 10.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. v. 22.

<sup>5</sup> Tit. i. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Tit. ii. 1, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Tit. ii. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Tit. iii. 10.

<sup>9</sup> Tit. i. 5.

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were invested with this office is fully attested by all ecclesiastical antiquity, which continually notices them respectively as Bishops of Ephesus and Crete ; recording Timothy in particular, as the first of a series of twenty-seven bishops, who had uninterruptedly presided in the former see in a continued line of succession from him, before the celebration of the great Council of Chalcedon in the middle of the fifth century.

Ecclesiastical antiquity also distinctly affirms, and clearly illustrates the fact, that authority to preside over the Church was, by the Apostles, transmitted to bishops in the several other places, where the Apostles themselves had first preached and planted the gospel.

“It is evident,” as observed in the Preface to our Ordination Services, “It is evident unto all men, diligently reading the holy scripture and ancient authors, that from the Apostles’ time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ’s Church ; bishops, priests, and deacons.” This distinction of orders, and the preeminence and superiority of the first, consisting in the power of ordaining to the ministry, and of exercising ecclesiastical jurisdiction, conformably to our preceding remarks on Timothy and Titus, are unequivocally stated by authors, who lived in, as well as immediately after, the Apostolical times. By no one are they more explicitly stated than by

St. Ignatius, whose familiar acquaintance with the Apostles must have rendered him thoroughly well acquainted with their constitution of the Church: whilst St. Clement, who likewise was an apostolical man, a companion and friend of St. Peter and St. Paul, and whom St. Paul mentions with honour to the Philippians, as one of his "fellow-labourers, whose names are written in the book of life<sup>1</sup>," describes the practice of the inspired representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ; in instituting the episcopacy, in ordaining the first members of the episcopal order, and in providing for its perpetuity by means of duly appointed successors in their office and ministry.

After this manner did the Apostles ordain bishops to the government of all the Churches, which they planted throughout the world: and these bishops were esteemed "the successors of the Apostles, representing them by a vicarious ordination," as Cyprian says, each in his own Church from the beginning: and the names are still on record, not only of Timothy in Ephesus, and Titus in Crete, but of the bishops who were constituted by the Apostles themselves, and of those who succeeded in the episcopal government, over the then most celebrated churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome, and Alexandria, and many

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iv. 8.

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others of the greatest distinction ; whilst in more remote and barbarous regions likewise, where-soever “the Apostles’ doctrine” was preached, “the Apostles’ fellowship,” in the establishment of that form of ecclesiastical polity which they instituted, was maintained ; the Church, which was “founded on the Apostles,” in respect of its belief, was founded on them also in respect of its discipline ; and episcopacy was confined within no narrower limits than the profession of Christianity itself.

In proof of this, all the best monuments of antiquity, down from the beginning of Christianity ; the judgments of the first glorious saints and martyrs of Christ ; the testimonies of particular fathers of the Church ; the annals of ecclesiastical historians ; the concurrent doctrine and canons of the Church, both Greek and Latin, both in the east and in the west ; conspire to establish the fact, of the same method of Church polity having been constantly and universally introduced and received : speaking of no form of government but by bishops ; affirming, that without bishops there is no Church ; proving the original of their Churches by the succession of their bishops ; recounting, as Dr. Barrow says, “long catalogues and rows of bishops succeeding in this and that city ; bishops contesting for the faith against pagan idolaters, and heretical corruptors of Chris-

tian doctrine ; bishops here teaching, and planting our religion by their labours, there suffering and watering it with their blood !."

In a word, the evidence which primitive antiquity supplies to the episcopal government of the Church is so conclusive, that, as the fact itself is placed beyond the reach of all reasonable contradiction, so the existence of the fact cannot be reasonably explained, but as an institution of the Apostles, acting under the direction of our Lord Jesus Christ. "A thousand five hundred years, and upward," said the incomparable Hooker between two and three centuries ago, "the Church of Christ hath now continued under the sacred regiment of bishops. Neither for so long hath Christianity been ever planted in any kingdom throughout the world, but with this kind of government alone : which to have been ordained of God, I am for mine own part as resolutely persuaded, as that any other kind of government in the world whatsoever is of God ?"

III. From the governors we proceed to consider the members of the Church at large, under their description of "faithful men."

The persons who are spoken of in my text, as having first composed the Church, are described

<sup>1</sup> Works, iii. 203.

<sup>2</sup> Eccle. Polity, vii. c. 1.

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by the significant appellation, “They that believed<sup>1</sup>.” “Believers” is the equally significant term, by which the first Christians are elsewhere described ; as “they that believed not<sup>2</sup>” is the term which denotes the opponents of Christianity<sup>3</sup>. Without a profession of the faith of Christ, admittance was not granted into the Church. “What doth hinder me to be baptized?” inquired the Ethiopian eunuch of his instructor. “And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God<sup>4</sup>.” So believing with all his heart, as the Evangelist required, and making profession of that faith, he was admitted. “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation<sup>5</sup>.”

Concerning the objects of this primitive faith, some light may be derived from the narrative introductory to my text. For when these first converts to the Christian belief “inquired of Peter and of the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 44. iv. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Acts v. 14. 1 Tim. iv. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xvii. 5. xix. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Acts viii. 36—38.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. x. 10.

For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Thus the existence of the Holy Three, and their co-operation in the work of man's salvation; the calling of the Everlasting and Almighty Father, the potency of the name of Christ for the remission of sins, and the consequent effusion of the Holy Spirit, are particularly noticed: whilst the very circumstance of the converts being baptized in pursuance of their belief, baptized, as they doubtless were, in obedience to Christ's command, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," is a corroborative testimony to their having been initiated into this great article of the true Christian faith.

Certain brief confessions of faith are noticed in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the apostolical epistles, from which it may be supposed, that the particulars most carefully impressed on the minds of the first believers were such as these: that "Jesus Christ is the Son of God<sup>1</sup>"; that "He is Lord of all<sup>2</sup>"; that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh<sup>3</sup>"; that "Jesus is the Christ<sup>4</sup>"; that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and

<sup>1</sup> Acts viii. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Acts x. 36. 1 John iv. 15.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John iv. 2.

<sup>4</sup> 1 John v. 1. ii. 22.

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healing all that were oppressed of the devil<sup>1</sup>;" that "He was crucified, and raised again from the dead<sup>2</sup>;" and that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name<sup>3</sup>." Thus the divine nature, the sovereignty, and the incarnation of our Lord; his Messiahship and wonderful works; his crucifixion and resurrection; and the great benefits derived from all these things to sinful but repentant men; appear to have been prominent particulars in the primitive Christian's belief. But without enlarging on particulars, we may remark, in general terms, that those things, which the Apostles taught, the first Christians punctually believed. "They continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine," as my context states concerning those who originally composed the Church.

There is, however, good reason to suppose, that at a very early period short summaries of Christian faith were compiled, and the profession of them particularly required of all persons baptized. These summaries or collections appear to be noticed in the Scriptures of the New Testament as "the form of sound words<sup>4</sup>;" "the words of faith<sup>5</sup>;" "the principles of the doctrine of Christ<sup>6</sup>." Some learned men have moreover been of opinion, that

<sup>1</sup> Acts x. 38.      <sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 23, 24. v. 30.    <sup>3</sup> Cor. xv. 3, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xxiv. 47.    <sup>5</sup> Acts ii. 38.                          <sup>6</sup> 2 Tim. i. 13.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 6.      <sup>2</sup> Heb. vi. I.

the articles of that collection of propositions, which we still possess and recite under the name of the Apostles' Creed, were selected and arranged by the Apostles themselves, as "propositions which did in conjunction integrate our faith, and were therefore necessary to be believed unto salvation;" and that this was "always esteemed in the primitive Church a full and perfect digest of all the necessary and fundamental articles of Christian religion." That, however, may be deemed a more probable opinion, which supposes, that some of the articles of the Apostles' Creed were derived in such combination from the very days of the Apostles; but that others were afterwards added, on the authority nevertheless of the apostolical writings, by the primitive doctors and bishops, in opposition to gross heresies and errors that sprang up in the Church; the particular articles of our present creed, which were inserted by the Apostles themselves, being those which affirm the existence of God, the Holy Trinity; the identity of Jesus with the Christ, the Saviour of the world; the remission of sins; and the resurrection of the dead.

Certain meanwhile it is, that in the writings of some of the earliest fathers, Irenæus, for instance, and Tertullian, in the middle and towards the end of the second century of the Christian era, summaries of faith are given, differing only in the

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order of arrangement, but reciting in substance the same articles of belief, as that faith, “ which the Catholick Church, to the very ends of the earth, hath received from the Apostles and their disciples;” as “ the one only rule of faith, immovable, unalterable;” “ the rule which had descended from the beginning of the Gospel;” “ the rule instituted by Christ, and admitting of no questions except those which heresies introduced, and which constitute hereticks.” And as none were baptized, according to the testimony of Justin Martyr, “ unless they first declared their assent to the doctrine and faith of the Gospel;” so we learn from the testimony of numerous other fathers, that “ in common practice, whoever appeared to differ from the common faith, was rejected as an apostate from Christianity, and as unworthy of the communion of other Christians.”

IV. In this “congregation of faithful men the pure word of God is preached,” as another mark of the Church of Christ: “the pure word of God,” as indicated by the before cited passages, which speak of “the Church,” as being first formed of those who gladly received “the word” preached unto them; as being “sanctified and cleansed by the word;” as being “the pillar and ground of the truth;” “the pure word of God,” as further indicated by “the Apostles’ doctrine,” in which the

new believers "stedfastly continued," and by the "foundation of the Apostles and Prophets," on which "the Church" is said to have been "built."

This pure word of God is comprehended in those writings, which the Holy Spirit hath caused to be composed and perpetuated for the instruction of all ages of the Church; and of which our sixth Article of Religion accordingly affirms, that "holy Scripture containeth," exclusively, "all things necessary to salvation."

This notion of the holy Scriptures, as containing the pure, the entire, word of God, delivered by Him for the instruction and salvation of his Church, is derived from the declarations of the inspired writers themselves: which teach us that the holy Scriptures, of the Old and New Testaments, in their several parts or collectively, are designed and written "for our learning<sup>1</sup>"; that they are calculated to fill us with "patience, comfort, and hope;" that they supply us with the lessons of "eternal life<sup>2</sup>"; that they are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness<sup>3</sup>"; that they are calculated to make "the man of God perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works<sup>4</sup>"; that they are able to make those who "know" them "wise unto

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xv. 4.

<sup>2</sup> John v. 39.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Ver. 17.

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salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus<sup>1</sup>;" that they empower us to "know the certainty of those things, wherein," as Christians, "we are instructed<sup>2</sup>"; that they are "written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through his name<sup>3</sup>."

Now, if all these properties be ascribed to the holy Scriptures, which are the written word of God, as signifying the intention wherewith they were written, and as shewing, in effect, their practical utility, it is by no means reasonable to look for any independent source of religious information, for any other revelation of God's will, for any other word of God, but such as holy Scripture supplieth.

Nor again can any other revelation be required, but upon a supposition prejudicial to the alleged character of holy Scripture itself: upon the supposition, namely, that the written word of God is either erroneous or defective. For, if information, derived from any such source, be at variance with holy Scripture, allowing the purity of that independent source, then must the written word of God be supposed to be erroneous: if it communicate instruction, which holy Scripture doth not impart, then must the written word of God be

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Luke i. 4.

<sup>3</sup> John xx. 31.

supposed to be defective. To suppose the former of these cases, that is, to suppose the written word of God to be erroneous, were to impeach the truth of God: even to suppose the latter, that is, to suppose the written word of God to be defective, is to suppose a case hardly reconcileable with the divine wisdom, on a consideration of the purposes for which that word is avowedly and most unambiguously alleged to have been written. But, indeed, the word of God, as comprised in the volume of inspiration, is perfect and uncorrupt. It has no mistakes which need to be corrected by a more infallible and paramount authority: no deficiencies which need to be made good by a supplemental and completer code. Go, and make inquiry of that word itself: it admits not the pretensions, it recognises not the existence, of any fellow, to share in its glorious office of leading men forward to salvation. But, like its Divine Author, jealous of its own peculiar attribute, and not content to "give its glory to another," it cries aloud, as it were, with a commanding voice, to those, who would swerve from its guidance, and wander into by-paths of human fabrication, "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left<sup>1</sup>."

Agreeable to this was the universal testimony

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xlvi. 8. xxx. 21.

of the primitive Christians, both in the apostolical times, and in those which immediately, and afterwards for many ages uninterruptedly succeeded. The Scriptures, which the Apostles had acknowledged or delivered, the Churches constantly received for their own direction, and regularly transmitted to their posterity. Upon these Scriptures they grounded their faith: to these Scriptures they still appealed as the foundation of their doctrines: they still argued from these Scriptures in proof of their doctrines: they still condemned all doctrines which were not contained in these Scriptures: and if at any time they brought forward human authorities to justify their opinions or expressions, they did so for the purpose of shewing that they were not chargeable with any innovation, in the doctrine or in the manner of expressing it; still referring for the origin and groundwork of their doctrine to the testimony of the written word of God. In that word the collective body of doctrines, of which all Christians made publick confession, and on which all their hopes of salvation depended, were all contained; and they agreed in no article of faith, which was not plainly laid down in Scripture. "If we inquire," observes Bishop Jeremy Taylor, "upon what grounds the primitive Church did rely for their whole religion, we shall find they knew none else but the Scriptures. 'Where is it written?'

was their first inquiry. ‘Do the Prophets and the Apostles, the Evangelists or the Epistles say so? Read it there, and then teach it: else reject it.’ They call upon their charges in the words of Christ, ‘Search the Scriptures:’ they affirm that the Scriptures are a full, that they are a perfect rule; that they contain all things necessary to salvation; and from hence they confute all heresies<sup>1.</sup>”

In a word, by a continued succession of the most distinguished writers in the first ages of the Church; by the full and unanimous testimony of the most ancient, learned, and orthodox fathers in supporting the proposition, and by the total silence of all in denying it, proof might be easily adduced, as indeed it has been abundantly adduced by eminent men, that the Scriptures are the word of God, and contain in them all the word of God with which we have any concern, and so are the full and perfect rule for the Church of Christ. Nay, the very title, which the Catholick Church hath always given to the Scriptures, calling them “the Canon,” the rule, the very model prescribed to Christians for the formation of their faith and practice, shews her sense of their sufficiency and completeness; and is a convincing proof that she

<sup>1</sup> Second Part of Dissuasive from Popery, B. I. P. ii.  
p. 410.

looked to them, and to them only, for the revelation of the will, and the record of the word, of God.

V. But further, together with the preaching of the pure word of God in Christ's Church is united "the due ministration of the sacraments according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." Christ Himself, the only sufficient authority to pronounce on such a case, determined baptism to be the manner, whereby those who believed in Him should be admitted into his Church in order to their salvation: and so He is said to "sanctify and cleanse his Church with the washing of water by the word." Again, Christ himself determined the holy communion of his body and blood to be the manner, whereby those who were admitted into the Church by baptism, and so made partakers of his salvation, should continue to partake of it.

These institutions accordingly formed the rule for the practice of the Apostles in the formation and continuation of the Church. The converts made on the first preaching of Peter and the other Apostles, as referred to in my text, were admonished to be "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins;" and thereupon "they who gladly received the word were baptized." By means of the same holy sacrament, the Ethiopian eunuch

was admitted into the Church by Philip the deacon; Paul by Ananias; Cornelius by command of Peter; Lydia of Thyatira "and her household" by Paul and his companions; and by the same Paul and Silas, the keeper of the Philippian prison, "he and all his<sup>1</sup>:" and so with respect to the various converts, whom the history of the Acts records. And they, who had been admitted into the Church by one sacrament, no less kept up their Christian privileges by a constant participation in the other. The first converts "continued stedfastly in breaking of bread and in prayers." The "breaking of bread" was so essential a part of primitive Christian worship, that the phrase appears to be employed for denoting the religious assemblies of the disciples. And it is plain from St. Paul's language to the Corinthians, that by partaking in the sacramental bread and wine they were considered to have communion in the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be maintained in their union together, as one body under one head<sup>2</sup>.

Thus then we regard the ministration of the sacraments as another mark of the visible Church of Christ: their "due ministration according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." For as Christ

<sup>1</sup> Acts viii. 38; ix. 18; x. 48; xvi. 15, 33.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 42, 46; xx. 7; 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

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ordained that they should be ministered, so also did He ordain some particulars concerning their ministration; and his ordinance is doubtless obligatory, not only with respect to the sacraments generally, but equally with respect to such particulars. Thus He commanded his Apostles to “baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Not only therefore is baptism with water “an essential part of this sacrament,” but baptism in the name of each Person of the glorious Trinity: and so doubtless it was ministered by the Apostles in obedience to their Lord’s commandment; for although the Scripture, as in my context, may sometimes seem to speak of baptism, as if it were administered only “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” his name is mentioned, as Cyprian says, “not as if the Father were omitted, but to shew that to the Father the Son was to be added:” whilst it fully appears elsewhere<sup>1</sup>, that mention was made of the Holy Ghost at the same time: and such, in obedience to the same command, and in imitation of the apostolical example, was the unanimous consent and practice of the Catholick or Universal Church.

Thus again Christ commanded his disciples to “eat of the bread” and to “drink of the cup in

<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 2, 3.

remembrance of him." In obedience to this command and ordinance of Christ, neither part of this sacrament can properly be withheld: but "both parts ought to be ministered to all Christians alike," as alike "of necessity requisite to its due ministration<sup>1.</sup>" Accordingly it is universally admitted, that the faithful in the primitive Church did receive this holy sacrament in both its parts: when "the cup of blessing," which the Apostles "blessed," was the constant concomitant of "the bread which they brake;" and the believers did all "eat of that bread and drink of that cup<sup>2.</sup>"

But another particular here occurs. For the sacraments, in order to be "duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance," must be ministered by men, who have Christ's authority for their ministration. Our Twenty-third Article affirms, "It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of publick preaching, or ministering the sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called and sent to execute the same." And the grounds of this affirmation are plain and good: for, since the ministers of the word and sacraments are "ambassadors for Christ," and act in his name, they ought necessarily to receive authority from Him, whom they represent as his ambassa-

<sup>1</sup> Art. xxx.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. x. 16; xi. 28.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20.

dors, and in whose name they act. Thus the Apostles derived their authority immediately from Christ Himself; and did not take upon them the office of preaching the word or ministering the sacraments in the Church, till they had been called and sent by its Divine Founder.

But, since the time of the Apostles, God our Saviour has not immediately, in his own person, appointed any one to the ministry. To the Apostles, however, He gave authority to provide for the performance of these ministerial duties, as likewise for the perpetuation of the ministerial office. Some accordingly they invested with the power of preaching the word and ministering the sacraments themselves: others again with the power of moreover ordaining such, as they in turn might think proper to be ordained for the like ministerial offices, in order that by transmission from them again a continual succession might be preserved of men lawfully called and sent to execute the ministerial office. Thus a time never has been, nor, as we believe in full reliance upon the promise of Christ, ever will be, but that a commission for duly ministering the sacraments may be derived mediately from the Divine Founder of the Church, through his first ministers the Apostles. "And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent" to execute this ministry, "which be chosen and called to this work by men who have publick

authority given unto them in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard."

If the question be asked, Who are they who have such publick authority given unto them in the congregation or Church of Christ, the answer shall be returned in the words of St. Ignatius, who, in his epistle to the Smyrnæans, having admonished them of the obedience and reverence respectively due to "their Bishop, Presbyters, and Deacons," concerning which orders he expressly affirms in his epistle to the Trallians, "without these there is no Church," proceeds literally thus: "Let no one without the Bishop do any thing of the matters which appertain to the Church. Let that be esteemed a firm eucharist, which is dispensed by the Bishop, or by him to whom he shall have given charge. Wherever the Bishop shall appear, there let the people be: as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholick or Universal Church. It is not lawful without the Bishop, either to baptize or to celebrate the feast of charity: but whatsoever he shall approve, that is well-pleasing to God also; that so every thing, which is done, may be safe and firm." Now Ignatius was Bishop of Antioch in Syria the latter part of the first, and the beginning of the second century of the Christian era; he laid down his life, in testimony of his religion, about seventy years after our Lord's death,

having been engaged in the ministry of the Church for forty years preceding his martyrdom ; he conversed familiarly with the Apostles, and was perfectly acquainted with their doctrine, and had the hands of Apostles laid upon him ; and he was in particular the immediate friend and disciple of “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” the Apostle and Evangelist St. John.

Thus adopting the outline sketched in our Articles of Religion, and filling it up with the particulars supplied by holy Scripture, and elucidated by the early records of Christianity, we arrive at a sufficiently clear view of the “visible Church of Christ,” in its state of militancy here on earth. And we doubt not, that where these marks are found in any national Church, such Church is intitled to be considered a true member of the Catholick Church of Christ : and that every individual member of such national Church, so far as depends upon the Church itself, and provided he make due use of his privileges, may be properly ranked among “the saved ;” forasmuch as he is thereby made partaker of every thing necessary for the enjoyment of grace in this world, and of everlasting salvation in the next.

These particulars are all apparent in our national Church, the united Church of England and Ireland, to which we, my brethren, have the happiness to

belong; which is modelled, as exactly as possible, upon the platform of the universal Church, as it was constituted in the days of the Apostles and primitive Christians.

Acknowledging, with the most lowly reverence, her subjection to her Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Supreme Head of herself, as of the whole Christian congregation, she honours and adores Him with the offering of her continual worship in the unity of the Divine nature; and reposes with devout confidence on his intercession with the Father, pleading his merits before the throne of the heavenly grace, as the “one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus<sup>1</sup>. ”

Looking up to Him as her supreme HEAD, invisible in the heavens, she recognises at the same time his visible delegates upon earth for all things spiritual, in the persons of those *governours*, “the Bishops and Pastors of his Church;” whom she believes to have received their episcopal charge and function from the Apostles of her Lord, by regular, unbroken, and legitimate succession, and so ultimately from her Lord himself.

The *faith* of the apostolical and primitive Church is hers: the faith, “once delivered unto the saints<sup>2</sup>,” and methodized and set forth in her publick formularies; stated compendiously in the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Jude, ver. 3.

Apostles' Creed, and more fully and illustratively in those of Nice and of Athanasius; detailed with greater particularity of exposition in her Articles of Religion; and interwoven and embodied into her forms of publick worship.

The *pure word of God* is preached in her assemblies: that word, which having been delivered in former times under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by the Apostles and Prophets, the sure foundation of the Church of Christ, was by them also committed to authentick documents; and has been guarded and handed down from age to age with such fidelity and care, as to preclude the suspicion of their being any other than the unadulterated word of God.

In her assemblies the *sacraments* are "duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same;" this, whereby her children are "received into the congregation of Christ's flock<sup>1</sup>," and "made members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven<sup>2</sup>;" that, whereby they may be continually "assured of God's favour and gracious goodness towards them, and that they are very members incorporate in the mystical body of his Son<sup>3</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> Office of Baptism.      <sup>2</sup> Catechism.

<sup>3</sup> Office of Holy Communion.

And this word is preached, and these sacraments are ministered, by *men regularly commissioned* to preach the one and minister the other; and who have received their commission from those who have authority to confer it, as delegates and in the name of “ Almighty God, the Giver of all good gifts, who by his divine Providence hath appointed divers orders of ministers in his Church<sup>1</sup>. ”

Would we then be partakers of that salvation, for which the Lord instituted his Church, let us seek it in that branch of it which He has graciously established in this kingdom. Under the blessing of the great Head of the Church, sufficient, we doubt not, are the means provided for our salvation in her apostolical communion. At the same time be it ever borne in mind, that however well-qualified by his grace be the Church of this nation to promote the salvation of those whom the Lord continually “ adds to it that they may be saved,” our incorporation with it will be then only effectual for the purpose, when we faithfully and diligently practise the means which the Lord has committed to it for our salvation: in a willing obedience and submission to those who are “ over us in the Lord;” in an earnest maintenance of the primitive faith of Christ; in a sincere devotion to

<sup>1</sup> Form of Ordination.

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the pure word of God; in a worthy attendance upon Christ's holy mysteries; in stedfast communion with his duly-constituted ministers in their spiritual ministrations; and all this out of obedience and love to Him, "who is the Head of the Church, and Saviour of the body," even Christ, "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" "who loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Unto Him, in the unity of the Father and the Holy Ghost, One Lord and God Almighty, be glory in the Church throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

O Almighty God, who hast built thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the head corner-stone; grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Collect for St. Simon and St. Jude's day.

## **DISCOURSE II.**

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### **THE NATIONAL CHURCH VINDICATED AS A TRUE PART OF CHRIST'S VISIBLE CHURCH.**

#### **PART II.**

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**Acts ii. 47.**

**And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.**

**I**N a former Discourse on these words we took a view of the Church of Christ, as instituted by authority of its divine Founder for man's salvation : and thence estimating the character of our national Church, the united Church of England and Ireland, we arrived at the conclusion, that she is intitled to be considered a true member of the Catholick Church of Christ ; and, as such, possesses all the means necessary for the enjoyment of grace in this world and of everlasting salvation in the next.

**Amongst the different objectors to the Church's**

claims, there are few, I apprehend, who deny her capability of ministering grace and salvation to her members, though they may be dissatisfied with her method of ministering them, and may prefer methods of their own choice, or appointment. Thus objections are sometimes made against her ecclesiastical polity, and her orders of ministers; or against her confessions of faith; or against her rules for reading the holy Scriptures; or against her forms of prayers and of administering the holy sacraments: but these objections are unessential, and can hardly be said to affect her claim to the character of a true part of the Church of Christ.

Other objectors however there are, a large and a numerous division, they fondly proclaim themselves to be the whole, of the Catholick Church, who take a higher, and, if it could be made good, a more formidable ground against her; and it is to these objectors that I would now draw your attention.

I. We know then, and to whom is it not known? that her character has been impugned, and her claim to the distinction of a *true member of Christ's Church* denied, because, whilst she acknowledges her subjection, in common with that of all Christian Churches, to Christ her Head, she does not acknowledge her subjection to a Vicar-

general of Christ on earth, invested with an absolute primacy or sovereignty over all Churches, and endowed with a spirit of infallibility: although she sees no reason to suppose that Christ Himself ever constituted such a vicar; although she sees no footsteps of any such universal vicar throughout the apostolical and primitive times; although the exercise of such authority, when first assumed, was a gross and palpable usurpation; and although there neither is nor can be any one man qualified to embrace and comprehend in his mind, much less to preside over and to regulate, the Universal Church of Christ, co-extensive as it is with all the regions of the earth.

We know that her character has been impugned, and the claim of her *governours* to their episcopal name and office contradicted, because they derive not their office from one universal bishop, the only bishop by immediate Divine dispensation, possessing in his own person plenitude of power, causing others to receive of his fulness, and distributing to them every privilege that they have: and yet she knows, that when Christ founded his Church, He appointed the Apostles to govern it, without any prerogative assigned to one over another, but each enjoying an equal share of power, each invested with the same authority, each intitled to exercise the same jurisdiction; that this unity and identity

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of power continued without question in the primitive Church, and descended without interruption to bishops, the acknowledged successors of the Apostles; that a prerogative, which did not exist in the beginning, could not exist in the descent, unless it were innovated and introduced by a new authority; that consequently, by the law of Christ, there is no sovereign hierarch to be “lord over God’s heritage<sup>1</sup>,” no pontifical potentate to exercise supremacy of dominion, or universality of jurisdiction, over his brethren; but that all bishops are, by Divine right, possessed of equal authority; and that every member of the episcopal order is stamped with the same character; and asserts a perfect and entire share in the same episcopate, according to the sentence of the Nicene Council, and the constant doctrine of the primitive Catholick Church.

We know that her character has been impugned, and her *faith* pronounced insufficient for salvation, because her creed contains not certain adscititious articles of belief, which the Apostles knew not, which have no resting place in the Apostles’ doctrine, but which are indeed mere modern gratuitous innovations, unwholesome excrescencies, corrupt appendages on the apostolical and primitive faith;

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter v. 3.

in many instances directly opposed to God's holy word, and incompatible with the true Catholick faith of Christ's Church.

We know that her character has been impugned, and her *rule of faith* pronounced to be "a cold, uncertain, unprofitable, dumb, killing, and dead letter;" incapable of teaching men what they must do to be saved, and unfit to be made the ground of our hopes of salvation, unless the true written word of God be accompanied by another unwritten word, and expounded by a paramount interpreter, from which even the Scripture itself derives its authority: although she perceives, in the word of God itself, no intimation of any such partner and interpreter; although such an addition would in her estimation be derogatory to the excellence of the written word, and inconsistent with its own high pretensions, as alleged in its behalf by Christ and his Apostles; and although the Catholick fathers and bishops of the primitive Church had recourse to nothing but the acknowledged writings of the Prophets and Apostles, for the establishment of the truth, and the confutation of heresy and error: appealing to the holy Scriptures as their sole authority; as the voice of God, by which He hath declared to us his will; as the refuge, wherein alone the soul of man can find rest; as the medicine, which fully and abundantly contains every thing necessary for the

soul's health ; as the revelation; wherein alone is manifested the power of God unto salvation.

We know that her character has been impugned, and her doctrine and practice concerning the *sacraments* reprobated and condemned as at variance with "the true Catholick faith, out of which no man can be saved :" because, in respect of *number*, she admits "two only as generally necessary to salvation," and does not allow of five adventitious sacraments, which yet she retains for the most part as useful and religious rites, but not under the notion of "sacraments of the gospel; seeing they have not like nature of sacraments with Baptism and the Lord's Supper : for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God<sup>1</sup>;" nor in fact were the five adventitious sacraments recognized as such, in their proper signification, by the primitive Fathers ; nor was the number seven ascertained and defined by any writer previous to the twelfth century. And again, she has been impugned in respect to her *ministration* of the sacraments, ministered though they be "according to Christ's ordinance, in all things that are requisite of necessity for the same ;" because they are not ministered with such rites and ceremonies, as she is persuaded are contrary to Christ's ordinance<sup>2</sup> ; and not made the

<sup>1</sup> Art. xxv.

<sup>2</sup> Art. xxv. xxviii.

vehicle of such doctrines, as she is persuaded to be "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits."<sup>1</sup> Finally, we know that her character has been impugned, and the commission of her ministers vilified, and their acts accounted of no avail, as if they were unqualified intruders into their holy office, unauthorized to be preachers of the word of God, and administrators of the sacraments of Christ: although the stream of their commission is derived, equally with that of her impugners, from the pure source of primitive and apostolical antiquity, through the unadulterated, uninterrupted channel of legitimate episcopal ordination; and thus her ministers, being duly called and rightfully appointed to their ministry, may claim, equally with her impugners, the divine sanction of Him, in whose name and behalf they act.

Objections, such as these, we know to be alleged against our national Church, as if she were not a true member of the Catholic Church of Christ, nor capable of conducting her children to salvation. But these things move her not whilst, with the holy Paul, she can make a good confession, *it after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets;*<sup>2</sup> and whilst accordingly, with profound

<sup>1</sup> Art. xxxi.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxiv. 14.

gratitude to her divine Founder and Head, she feels confident in the persuasion, that those characteristick marks, which distinguished the primitive apostolical Church, and those requisites for salvation, which the Apostles were God's instruments for dispensing, are substantially found in her offices and ministrations.

II. If, indeed, for we will suppose a case, wherein, could her character be justly impugned, it might be well deemed incapable of vindication; if, "intruding into those things which she hath not seen, and vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind," she were so far to estrange herself from the allegiance exclusively due to her supreme Head, even Christ, as to be "beguiled of her reward in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels<sup>1</sup>" and other created beings; advancing them to the dignity of mediators and intercessors between God and men; and honouring one in particular with a participation of the majesty and sovereignty of heaven, and with the right, in virtue of her maternal authority, of commanding the Redeemer:—

If she were to invest one of her earthly rulers with the dignity of supreme head and governour of the whole Church on earth; ascribing to him a sovereign power and authority over all other

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 18, 19.

Churches ; constituting him superior to all kings and magistrates, the source of their dominion, the judge of all persons in all spiritual causes, and the disposer of all their temporal things in order to a spiritual good ; attributing to him the properties of the Deity ; addressing him by divine titles ; and alleging that it would be idolatry to disobey his commands, and that, if he should err by commanding sins or forbidding virtues, yet the Church would be bound to believe that the vices were good, and the virtues evil :—

If, in a jealous preference of her own fancied preeminence and prerogative, she were to excommunicate all other national churches, who did not acknowledge and submit to her assumed supremacy and infallibility ; and denounce them as false and heretical ; and lay them under a ban of solemn anathema and execration ; and deny them to have the means of salvation, and the exercise of an apostolical and lawful ministry :—

If she were to arrogate to herself dominion over the faith of all Christians, and assert a power, not only of declaring new articles of faith, but of making new symbols and creeds, and imposing them as necessary to salvation ; and if, in pursuance of such power, she were to prescribe a method of salvation which Christ and his Apostles never taught ; to the articles of faith, which she professes for the guidance of her members, as

being those which were delivered by the Apostles; and believed by the primitive Church, annexing other articles, and binding them upon the belief of men as containing the true Catholick faith, out of which no man can be saved: articles, not known to the Apostles and first Christians, & fond things, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the word of God<sup>1</sup>:—

If, instead of preaching the holy Scriptures, as containing all things necessary to salvation, she were to take another rule and canon for her teaching; affirming that “there is not expressly contained in Scripture all necessary doctrine, either concerning faith or manners,” and changing, that “traditions be received with no less piety and veneration than the books of Scripture”; thus, “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”; fathering upon the God of heaven the weak conceptions of a human wit; fastening upon Him those things which He never wrote; and weakening the authority, and denying the sufficiency, of what He hath written; overlaying the doctrine of evangelical truth with a burden of human imaginations; disordering and innovating upon the Christian religion, which, like its great and glorious Founder, is “the same yesterday, to-

<sup>1</sup> Art. xxii.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xv. 9.

day, and for ever<sup>1</sup>;” “making the word of God of none effect through her traditions,” and derogating from the prerogative of Christ, who alone is “the Author and Finisher of our faith<sup>2</sup>;”—

If, instead of duly ministering the sacraments with decency and order, and to edification<sup>3</sup>; “according to Christ’s ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same,” so that her children may “worthily receive” and “duly use<sup>4</sup>” them, she were to cause them by her mode of ministration to become occasions of superstition and idolatry, the one by being mingled with many fond and idle ceremonies, the other by being “carried about, lifted up, gazed upon, and worshipped<sup>5</sup>;” or were to demean them in such a way, as to “overturn the very principles of nature, and the established order of things,” “to be repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, to overthrow the nature of a sacrament, to give occasion to many superstitions<sup>6</sup>,” and to depreciate at the same time, or nullify the value of the Redeemer’s sacrifice, and become the cause of “blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits<sup>7</sup>;” or were to dispense them with such limitations, as to withhold from her people one of the sacra-

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xiii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xv. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. xii. 2.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 26. 40.

<sup>5</sup> Art. xxv.

<sup>6</sup> Art. xxv. xxviii.

<sup>7</sup> Bp. Hall’s “*No peace with Rome*,” ix. 63.

<sup>8</sup> Art. xxviii. <sup>9</sup> Art. xxxi.

mental elements at the Holy Communion of Christ's body and blood; thus "altering and mutilating the last institution of her Saviour; sacrilegiously robbing God's people of one half of that heavenly provision, which the Saviour left for his last and dearest legacy to his Church for ever<sup>1</sup>;" on the one hand, admitting communion in both kinds to have been the ordinance and commandment of Christ, the practice of the Apostles and primitive Christians, and for many ages the undeviating custom of the ancient Fathers and Bishops of the Church, yet nevertheless, on the other hand, boldly annulling by a solemn decree such communion, and threatening ejection and punishment upon such hereticks as should stubbornly oppose the decree:—

If, lastly, she were so to magnify the office of her ministers, as, by an inversion of the apostolical maxim, to give them "dominion over the faith" of their people, instead of being "helpers of their joy<sup>2</sup>"; to sanction them in withholding from the people their Christian privilege of "searching and knowing the holy Scriptures<sup>3</sup>"; and their privilege, as rational and responsible beings, of exercising their understanding in judging of them; and to constitute their ministers the sole unerring arbi-

<sup>1</sup> Bp. Hall's "*Dissuasive from Popery.*" ix. 19.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. i. 24.      <sup>3</sup> Acts xvii. 11.      2 Tim. iii. 15.

ters of what they shall read, and what they shall believe: or, again, were she so to magnify the ministerial office as to usurp the prerogative of God, and to lay an intolerable yoke on the consciences of all men ; to give her ministers authority for demanding of every man a compulsory confession of all and singular his sins, with all their circumstances, as necessary by the divine law to his salvation ; to give them authority for pronouncing upon every man, as likewise necessary to his salvation, a judicial and authoritative sentence of absolution and forgiveness of sins ; and to arrogate to herself, and to every one of her ministers, the power,—(my soul recoils from the thought which my argument constrains me to lay before you)—of creating God, the Creator of all, and offering up the same God before the face of God the Father ; of immolating day by day, and offering continually upon the altar, for a true, proper, propitiatory sacrifice, the same Saviour, the same identical victim, who once offered himself upon the cross ; and of causing to be received by the teeth and mouth of believers and unbelievers indiscriminately, and of exposing withal to other the vilest indignities, the true, real, substantial body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ :—

If now in these particulars, which I have been

supposing, (the supposition in truth is so preposterous, that we might well hesitate to admit the possibility of the case, if we were not unhappily assured that it has existed;) if, I say then, my brethren, the national Church, to which we belong, were justly liable to a charge of such enormities as these; far be from us the venturous assertion, that she would thereby abdicate and forfeit her claim to the distinction of a true part of the Church of Christ, so that her members would be utterly incapable of salvation; but surely we need not scruple to affirm, that she could not be correctly described as other than a most unsound, most corrupted, and most diseased part of it; and that by such practices as these she would go far towards annulling the blessings, which, as a true member of the Catholick Church of Christ, she is calculated to dispense; and would lay her ministers under a burden of most perilous responsibility; and would put to a most fearful hazard the salvation of the souls of her people!

Praise be to God in our Lord Jesus Christ for his abundant mercy! if such corruptions and perversions of the truth as this, which have been now supposed, did ever overcast our national Church; (and the charge, with whatever shame of face and sorrow of heart it may be deplored, cannot surely with sincerity be denied!) that "day of trouble, of

rebuke, and of blasphemy<sup>1</sup>;” that “day of darkness and gloominess, of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains,” hath passed away from the holy hill of our Zion. “The sun of righteousness<sup>2</sup>” hath again “arisen upon her, with healing in his wings.” Under the blessed visitation and regenerating influence of “the day-spring from on high<sup>3</sup>,” she hath “cast her idols” of human invention “to the moles and to the bats<sup>4</sup>;” and although subject to human infirmity, and therefore not presuming to account herself free from fallibility or error, yet with respect to such deformities as these, she trusts that she has been “sanctified and cleansed<sup>5</sup>” by her divine Founder; and in the simplicity of her allegiance to that Founder, in the apostolical origin and formation of her polity, in the uncorruptness of her faith, in her devotion to the pure word of God, in her due ministration of the sacraments, and in the character and pretensions of her ministry, she stands forth in the eye of Christendom, (with honest and heartfelt exultation be it spoken, but without arrogance or irreverence, and with the most lowly thankfulness to the Author of all good!), she stands forth in the eye of Christendom, “a glorious Church,” worthy of all honour in

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxxvii. 3.<sup>2</sup> Joel ii. 2.<sup>3</sup> Mal. iv. 2.<sup>4</sup> Luke vii. 78.<sup>5</sup> Isa. li. 20.<sup>6</sup> Eph. v. 27.

her national capacity as “the Church of the living God<sup>1</sup>:” “the pillar and ground of the truth;” “the keeper and the witness of holy writ<sup>2</sup>;” the treasure-house of Christ’s holy mysteries; the ark and gate of salvation.

In the considerations which have been proposed in this, and the former Discourse, concerning the Christian Church, as the appointed avenue to salvation, and concerning the estimate which may thence be formed of the pretensions of any particular Church, those who have given their thoughts to the subject, and examined it by the light of apostolical rules and practices, as contained in holy Scripture, and attested by primitive antiquity, will perceive, in what has been now advanced, no recommendation beyond its concurrence with their own previously established and well digested principles. It is, indeed, by their conformity to such principles that the value of expositions like the present is to be tried. But there are those whose minds are little conversant, less so indeed than the present need of the Church requires, with such inquiries as these. As to persons of this description, it is highly desirable, that they be led to the perception of what the Church of Christ really is: and they should be taught to

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Art. xx.

see, what it is the object of such discourses as these to show, that the national Church of England and Ireland is a true member of the Catholick or Universal Church of Christ: that, as such, she has in her dispensation all the requisites for salvation: that the objections, by which her character has been sometimes assaulted, are unfounded and unsubstantial: and that, as she is a true, so likewise is she a sound, and uncorrupt, and healthy member of Christ's holy Catholick Church; and may therefore be trusted with assured confidence by those, who in her communion practise "the means of grace," and cherish "the hope of glory."

It may be deemed the natural disposition of those who dissent from an establishment to be on the watch against it; to be careful in making themselves acquainted with their own peculiar points of dissent, and to be attentive to the defects of those from whom they differ. And this natural disposition is perhaps fomented by the peculiar sentiments and circumstances of the members of other communions in this kingdom, of none more than of that, to whose objections against the national Church, and to whose own lofty pretensions, allusion has been made at considerable length in this Discourse. At the same time there is abroad a spirit of opposition or indifference to ecclesiastical establishments, and to

particular professions of faith: in many, a luke-warmness, nearly akin to scepticism or unbelief, with respect to the truths of Christianity: in some, an indisposition to admit the obligations, and bend themselves to the control, of any religion.

Under such circumstances, and in such times, it may be judged especially necessary, though indeed the necessity exists at all times, and under all circumstances, for the members of our national Church to be well acquainted, not only with those principles of Christianity which they hold in common with others, who "profess and call themselves Christians," but equally with the peculiarities and the grounds of their own distinguishing profession: to be satisfied at least in their own minds and consciences, and to be enabled, as far as possible, and whenever it may be expedient, to satisfy others, concerning the stability of their hopes of salvation, in the communion of a true and sound member of the One Holy Catholick and Apostolick Church of Christ.

To assist in bringing the members of the Church in general into acquaintance with these peculiarities, is one of the imperative duties of those who are intrusted with the sacred office of the ministry: for it is their duty, as specially bound upon them by their ordination vow, to "teach the people committed to their care and charge, with

all diligence to keep and observe the doctrine and discipline, and the sacraments of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church and realm hath received the same according to the commandments of God." This obligation calls from *us*, as occasions serve, expositions of the nature, the constitution, and the privileges of the Church, of her belief, her ministers' qualifications, and her sacred rites; and the fulfilment of it is intended to generate in *you* "a reasonable service," founded on a deliberate and conscientious attachment to the Church, and accomplished in a steadfast communion with her in all holy things.

With respect to those persons, who decline the Church's communion, and who seek salvation by other methods than hers, whatever be their defects, or whatever be their superfluities, either in doctrine or in practice, and however these deviations of theirs may affect their prospects of salvation, I forbear all reflection. But for my own part, that I may adopt the forcible language of the author of an Essay on the Church, the late Reverend William Jones, of Nayland, "I would not for the whole world, unworthy as I am; I say I would not for the whole world, and all the kingdoms of it, be in doubt, whether I was translated or not into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. I would not be in doubt whether I have the sacraments, or whether I have them not." What is the con-

dition of those, who “hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering” in such a Church as ours, my brethren, always understanding a correspondence between their profession and their practice, there is no rational doubt. And, therefore, inviting you to join me in the thanksgiving and in the prayer, expressed in the simple words of our Church Catechism, “I heartily thank our heavenly Father, that he hath called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. And I pray unto God to give me his grace, that I may continue in the same unto my life’s end.”

Lord, we beseech thee to keep thy household the Church in continual godliness; that through thy protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly given to serve thee in good works, to the glory of thy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Collect for the Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.

## DISCOURSE III.

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### THE NATIONAL CHURCH CONFORMABLE IN PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES WITH THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH.

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Acts ii. 41, 42.

Then they that gladly received the word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

THE Acts of the Apostles contain, as the most authentick, so also the most valuable and important, records of the infant Church of Christ. Although the book is by no means to be regarded as a complete history, it nevertheless presents us with some very interesting details, and especially brings us acquainted with several essential principles, which served for the foundation, the composition, and the regulation of the new society. Amongst passages of this description, there is no one perhaps

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which in so small compass comprises an ampler series of instructive particulars, or suggests more useful reflections to the reader, than the text which has been just recited to you. We are there informed, both of the manner in which converts were admitted into the Christian Church; and likewise of the method, according to which they were required to conduct themselves after their admission. "Then they that gladly received his word," namely, the word of Peter preaching repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, "were baptized;" and so "were added by the Lord to the Church" by means of that sacrament which He had Himself instituted for the purpose; and were thereby enrolled in the number of "the saved," that is, of those, who, being blessed by God's grace with the means of salvation here, are consequently put into a capacity of attaining everlasting salvation hereafter. The special method for the attainment of that salvation is stated in the subsequent narrative of their conduct after their admission into the Church: "They continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers;" in other words, they constantly professed to believe the doctrine, delivered by the Apostles; they held constant communion or fellowship with them, as became members of that society, of which the Apostles

were deputed governors by Christ himself; and they constantly communicated in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and in the publick devotions of the congregation. Thus did they continually maintain their connexion with the Church, to which they had been added, and tread in the path of that salvation, to which they had been admitted, by the Lord.

The text then, as it has been just now briefly explained, appears to contain several particulars, which characterised the primitive Christian Church. These characteristicks may be assumed with propriety as criteria, whereby we may judge of the condition of any branch of the Church in subsequent periods of its history. Because, as the Christian community was at that time under the guidance and government of men divinely inspired, and as we are expressly told that they who were admitted into that community were thus admitted into a state of salvation, we may be well assured, that with respect to all essential particulars the practice of the first Christians was such as may be followed with security, and cannot be deserted without hazard. Accordingly an exposition of the conformity which subsists between the primitive Church of Christ, and that pure and apostolical branch of it established in these dominions, with respect to the particulars specified in the text; accompanied with such remarks as may appear

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useful for the purpose of shewing the reasonableness of the particulars under examination, and their foundation in the revealed will of God; is the subject to which I am now proposing to direct your attention.

The particulars enumerated may be considered in two divisions: as describing, first, the admission of persons into the Church; secondly, their continuance in it.

First, then, it appears from the passage before us, that it was the practice of the primitive Christians to admit new members into the Church by the sacrament of baptism, agreeably to our Lord's premonition, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God<sup>1</sup>"; and in obedience to his commandment, "Go ye, and teach," or rather, as in the margin of our translation, "make disciples or Christians of all nations, baptizing them<sup>2</sup>." That the same is the practice of our own Church, is a notorious fact. And it is matter of equal notoriety, that the same was the constant and universal practice of all other branches of the Christian Church, until of late years, when a sect arose, which, pretending to superior degrees of

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxviii. 19.

inward illumination, rejected altogether this sacrament of baptism, although instituted by our Lord himself as the ordinary means of grace, and as generally necessary to salvation.

It is by no means my wish or intention to indulge in uncharitable reflexions upon persons, whose views of any part of Christian faith or practice are different from those which are entertained and sanctioned by our Church. But it is hardly possible to refrain, in the discussion of my proposed subject, from adverting to some of these differences: and, provided it be done with temper, I trust that it may be done also without offence.

In pursuance then of the allusion already made to the rejection of baptism by a sect, which had its origin in England about two centuries ago, I proceed to remark, that I shall not dwell upon the very unsatisfactory and futile arguments, whereby the advocates of the sect in question have attempted to justify their conceit, by refusing to understand various passages of Scripture in their natural signification, and wresting them to a figurative sense. In some instances at least the passages alluded to are incapable of the sense thus violently imposed upon them. But even if they were not so, if they might fairly be considered, without a particular key to the interpretation of them, as of ambiguous signification; the universal practice of the Church, from the earliest

to the present times, is an unanswerable guide to their meaning. In this respect the practice of the primitive Christians, as recorded in the text, and as confirmed in numerous other passages of the Acts of the Apostles, and of their epistolary compositions, especially deserves consideration. "They that gladly received the word," that is, the word of Peter and the other Apostles, exhorting them to be "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," "were baptized." But why were they so exhorted by Peter and the other Apostles? Manifestly because to those very Apostles their Lord had given it in charge, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them: He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved<sup>1</sup>." I do not see how it is possible to separate the consideration of the practice of the Apostles from that of the injunction of their Lord. The practice, therefore, thus established in the primitive Church, is not of importance to the question, merely because it shews abstractedly the form by which converts were admitted: but it is of still greater importance, inasmuch as it shews the sense entertained of our Saviour's commandment by his accredited Ministers, and therefore affords an infallible rule for our imitation. For when we hear our

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 19. Mark xvi. 16.

Saviour commanding his Apostles to "baptize all nations," as the constituted form of introduction to his Church, and as the appointed means of present grace and future salvation; and when we see his Apostles, to whom the commandment was given, regularly practising baptism in its natural, plain, literal, obvious signification of baptizing with water; considering especially that the Apostles were no ordinary men, but persons acting under the influence of that Holy Spirit, who was sent for the express purpose of "teaching them all things," and "guiding them into all truth": we apprehend that all ambiguity with respect to his meaning, if any ambiguity previously existed, at once vanishes: and no other argument should seem requisite to convince us of the propriety, or rather of the necessity, as far at least as by the revealed word of God we may presume to judge of the necessity, of acting, as the Apostles saw reason to act, and as the apostolical Church has ever acted, in consequence of the commandment of our Lord.

Whilst the sect, to which I have alluded, objects to baptism altogether, another sect, with pretensions to antiquity but little surpassing those of the former, objects to the baptism of infants, practised

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 26. xvi. 13.

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in our Church, and practised also, not only through a succession of ages in the universal Church, but of old, as we believe, in the primitive and apostolical Church likewise: practised, I say, in the apostolical Church; because the commission of our Lord to his Apostles, that they should “baptize all nations,” was general without any exception of children, of whom every nation in a great measure consists; and because the Apostles did, as we are informed, actually baptize whole families and households<sup>1</sup>, children therefore no less than adults, as the universality of the phrase imports. And this practice, thus originating and transmitted to our times, we retain and defend: because by the positive institution of God the Jews observed the circumcision of infants<sup>2</sup>, and therefore it was to be expected, that, forasmuch as baptism succeeded to and superseded circumcision, infants would be baptized in the Christian Church, and therefore they would most probably have been excepted in terms, had they been intended to be excepted in fact; because infants, though incapable of some of the purposes of baptism, are not incapable of others; because they have need of God’s grace, and are able to receive it, and were under the Mosaick covenant actually admitted to it, and can-

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvi. 15, 33.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xvii. 10—12. Lev. xii. 3.

not be supposed to enjoy inferior privileges under the more glorious dispensation of the Gospel<sup>1</sup>; because our Saviour commanded them to be brought unto Him, with an expression of high displeasure against those that would have kept them from Him, and “embraced them in his arms, and laid his hands upon them, and blessed them, thus by his outward gesture and deed declaring his good will towards them<sup>2</sup>;” finally, because it is by no means to be believed, that they, concerning whom Christ has pronounced that “of such is the kingdom of God,” should be excluded from baptism, which He has solemnly appointed to be the avenue to that kingdom, and without which He has affirmed that no one shall enter in<sup>3</sup>. For reasons such as these we adhere to the custom, which long prevailed throughout universal Christendom, of suffering infants to be brought unto their Saviour, that He may “embrace them with the arms of his mercy, that he may give unto them the blessing of eternal life, and make them partakers of his heavenly kingdom<sup>4</sup>:” and whilst on the one hand we contend in the language of our authorised confessions of faith, that baptism is

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Mark x. 13—16. See the Ministration of the Publick Baptism of Infants.

<sup>3</sup> John iii. 3, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Publick Baptism of Infants.

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"generally necessary to salvation<sup>1</sup>," we scruple not to maintain on the other, that "the baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ<sup>2</sup>."

I pass on to the second division of my subject, and therein to a consideration of the conduct of the primitive Christians after their admission by baptism into the Church.

And first we are informed, that "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine;" that is, they persevered in a constant belief and profession of those doctrines which the Apostles taught. It appears then that they did not approve of a frigid indifference to peculiar modes of faith; but they held resolutely, and they "contended earnestly" for that which had been "once delivered to them" by their inspired teachers<sup>3</sup>: being, doubtless, persuaded of this truth, that it is a Christian's faith which distinguishes him from the professors of all other religions; and admonished not in vain by their Saviour's unequivocal declaration, that, wherever the Gospel is preached, it is required of all men that they believe it; that "he who be-

<sup>1</sup> Church Catechism.

<sup>2</sup> Article xxvii.

<sup>3</sup> Jude 3.

liveth, shall be saved, but he, who believeth not, shall be damned<sup>1</sup>."

Of the several articles, which the primitive Christians believed, the Scriptures do not supply us with one precise compendious enumeration. Generally they believed "the Apostles' doctrine," or those truths which the Apostles taught: the particulars must be collected from the narrative of the Acts, and from the writings of the Apostles themselves, added to the accounts which the Gospels deliver of the teaching of our blessed Lord.

A few of these articles may be recited. They believed then in the existence of the ever-blessed Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; for into their name they were baptized by a form of words<sup>2</sup>, not only useless and insignificant, but unintelligible, inconsistent, and absurd, unless intended to convey the notion of three several personal agents united in one Divine substance. They believed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God<sup>3</sup>: an article, which not only imported his Divine mission, as a Prophet, to instruct mankind; but which comprised likewise the mysterious doctrines of his incarnation, death, and intercession<sup>4</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> Mark xvi. 16.      <sup>2</sup> Matt. xxviii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Acts viii. 37. ix. 19. Matt. xvi. 16. John vi. 69. xi. 27.

<sup>4</sup> 1 John v. 1. iv. 2. ii. 1, 2.

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with all their momentous consequences; and not to believe these things they regarded as a signal opposition to the Christian dispensation; as a heresy, which in an especial manner excluded him who espoused it from the enjoyment of a Christian's privileges, and ranged him in direct hostility to evangelical truth<sup>1</sup>. They believed that the Holy Spirit, to whose service, conjointly with that of the Father and of the Son, they had been dedicated, and whom conjointly with the Father and with the Son they worshipped and glorified, was sent to supply the immediate presence of the Son with his faithful followers<sup>2</sup>; to purify the corruption, and to strengthen the weakness, of their nature; and to confer upon them that gracious assistance, without which they could do no good thing, but with and by which they were enabled to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling<sup>3</sup>." Finally, they believed, that the Son of God, who had come into the world in great humility to die for the sins of men, would hereafter appear again in glory and great majesty to judge them; when they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire<sup>4</sup>.

These are some of the leading particulars of that apostolical doctrine, I speak briefly and summarily as the present occasion will allow, in which

<sup>1</sup> 2 John 7—10.

<sup>2</sup> John xvi. 7. xiv. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. ii. 12, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xxv. 31, 32. 46.

the primitive Christian converts stedfastly continued. And these are some of the particulars, which the Church of England has laid down for the regulation of the faith of her members: which she has stated compendiously in her creeds; has detailed with greater fulness of exposition in her articles; and has interwoven and incorporated into her liturgy.

It is a proof of the unhappy weakness and pride of our nature, that men will not be contented to believe what God hath taught them, but take their own inventions and imaginations too frequently for the rule of their religious faith, adding to or diminishing the truths, which are comprised in the written word of God.

Thus on the one hand it may be sufficient if I advert briefly to that accumulation of superstition and corruption, wherewith the Church of Rome hath overwhelmed the scriptural and apostolical doctrines of the Gospel, by filling the minds of her deluded followers with traditional notions concerning an infallible hierarchy; concerning purgatory, pardons, or indulgences, the worshiping and adoration of images, of crosses, and of reliques, and the invocation of the Virgin Mary, and other saints; concerning the five supernumerary saeraments; concerning the change of the substance of bread and wine in the supper of the Lord, and the consequent elevation and worship-

ping of the consecrated elements; concerning the repeated offering of Christ in the sacrifice, as they call it, of the mass: in a word, concerning those characteristick articles of faith, which the Church of Rome hath added to the articles of the Apostles' Creed, and by which she is peculiarly distinguished from our reformed and apostolical part of the holy Catholick Church of Christ. These, we boldly affirm, are points of doctrine, which the Apostles never taught, and which were not articles of belief with the first professors of Christianity: and which therefore it never can be our duty to receive and believe.

On the other hand, whilst the Church of Rome hath erred in thus adding to the Apostles' doctrine, other professors there have been of Christianity, who, as we judge, have no less grievously erred in diminishing it, and cutting off from it those articles by which it is especially marked.

As an example of such defalcation of the truth, I would particularly direct your thoughts to that form of the Christian religion, if indeed a form of the Christian religion it can be called, which is in fact nothing else but an exclusion, from the Christian profession, of every thing that distinguishes the Christian faith; and which would at once deprive us of the true scriptural object and the solid ground of religious worship, of the foundation of our faith, the anchor of our hope, and the most

powerful motives and means to holiness of life, by denying the divine nature, the meritorious humiliation and atonement, the mediation, the intercession, and the judicial advent of the Son of God, and the personal existence and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit of grace. Other corruptions there are of the purity of the Gospel revelation, some of them indeed by no means of trivial importance, but nevertheless inferior in foulness and malignity to these: these affect the very vitals of Christianity: these divest our holy religion of its essential properties, and leave it but the shadow of a name: against these we must be most vigilantly on our guard, and utterly reject, and abjure them, as we value our continuance in that apostolical doctrine, which introduces us to the knowledge and confession of "the truth as it is in Jesus."

2ndly, The primitive Christians "continued steadfastly in the Apostles' fellowship :" that is, they held constant communion or fellowship with them, as became members of that society, of which the Apostles were deputed governors by Christ himself.

For this they appear to have had two especial reasons: namely, a regard to their own spiritual welfare, and a regard to the honour of God and the good of his Church.

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They had regard to their own spiritual welfare. For our blessed Lord having commissioned his Apostles to preach the Gospel, to administer the sacraments, and generally to superintend and regulate the affairs of the Church; and having promised his blessing to their ministration, in the assurance before his crucifixion, that he would “send the Comforter” to supply his personal presence with them<sup>1</sup>, and in the valedictory declaration at his ascension, that he would thus be spiritually present with them “alway, unto the end of the world<sup>2</sup>;” it would naturally be a matter of anxious concern to those, who valued the blessing of Christ’s presence by his Spirit, to hold constant communion with the Apostles, to whose ministration the blessing was engaged.

Again, they had regard to God’s honour and the good of his Church. For the prosperity of every society, and of the Christian society amongst others, depends on the agreement of its members, according to that observation of our Lord, that “a house divided against itself is brought to desolation.” And the prosperity of the society reflecting honour upon those who preside over it, and God presiding in a special manner over the Christian Church, his honour is promoted by the prosperity of the Church; and therefore our Lord had in his

<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxviii. 20.

human nature supplicated the Father for the unity of his disciples, as a means whereby the glory of God might be magnified, and men might be brought to believe and acknowledge his truth<sup>1</sup>.

Now the Church of England and Ireland instructs her members, after the example of the primitive Church, to “continue stedfastly in the Apostles’ fellowship:” that is to say, to hold communion with the persons, now executing the apostolical office; for to hold communion with the Apostles themselves, personally considered, is manifestly impossible, and must have been so for more than seventeen hundred years: but she instructs them to hold communion with the persons, at this time invested with the apostolical office, regularly transmitted to them from the Apostles themselves. The persons invested with that office have ever been, and still are, the Bishops of the Church. From the earliest ages of ecclesiastical antiquity they were accounted to exercise the apostolical function; and accordingly the government of the Church was exclusively administered by them till above fifteen hundred years after its establishment, when new forms of polity were introduced by speculative men, to the infinite division and injury of the body of Christ.

Still however for our “continuing stedfastly in

<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 20—23.

the Apostles' fellowship," or, to express myself in equivalent terms, for our adherence to the episcopal form of Church government, and to the ministry of an episcopal priesthood, there exist the same reasons now, as existed in the primitive times. For on the one hand, as the promise of Christ's spiritual presence and protection was given, not to the Apostles in their own persons only, but likewise by necessary implication to their legitimate successors in the apostolate "alway even unto the end of the world;" so it is by communion with such their successors that we may be assured of receiving those blessings, which He promised immediately to his Apostles: whilst, on the other hand, the evils which inevitably spring from dissensions among Christians, the obstacles thereby presented to the promotion of pure religion, and the occasion afforded to the infidel and the sceptick for blaspheming God's holy name, ought at all times to operate upon us with undiminished efficacy, and incite us, as to union with each other, so to dutiful obedience and submission to our spiritual rulers. Schism is an evil, so alien in its own character from the principles of our holy and benevolent religion, and so prolific of consequences the most pernicious, that no inducement, short of a full and rational conviction of his inability to communicate with a safe conscience, as was the case with our ancestors when

they renounced the errors of the Church of Rome; should tempt a man to separate himself from an apostolical branch of the Christian Church, such as is established in this country. To separate wantonly and wilfully from such a Church is, according to the most plain declarations of holy writ, absolutely sinful. If however we take the question merely upon the ground of expediency, and revert to our former view of the subject, in that view separation is at least altogether unnecessary, if it be not moreover full of great uncertainty and hazard. Spiritual edification, as leading ultimately to everlasting salvation, is the only reasonable motive for such a proceeding. But spiritual edification is no where to be had, if not under that form of ecclesiastical polity, which is modelled after the pattern of apostolical precedent, and wherein "the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance" by men "lawfully called and sent to execute the same<sup>1</sup>." And although we will not presume to say, that grace may not be conveyed, or that salvation may not be attained, under another form of government and from the services of an irregular ministry; yet thus much may safely and, I trust, inoffensively be affirmed, that under the episcopal form is to be found "the

<sup>1</sup> Articles xix. xxiii.

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Apostles' fellowship;" that there, if any where, may confidently be expected the sanctifying influences of the Comforter; that there, if any where, may be enjoyed the perpetual presence of the Divine Founder of the Church.

A third particular specified in the text, as characterizing the conduct of the primitive Christians was, that "they continued stedfastly in breaking of bread," or in a constant participation of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. As they were admitted into the Church by one, so were they retained in it by the other, of those ordinances which Christ appointed to be observed as the peculiar badges of his followers: as they were made partakers of his grace by one, so were they preserved in the enjoyment of it by the other, of those holy mysteries, which Christ instituted as the ordinary vehicles of grace: as they were spiritually born anew by baptism, so did they receive continually fresh accessions of spiritual vigour by the communion of Christ's body and blood. I say, of Christ's body and blood: for, although the text, by a very common figure of speech, makes mention of the bread alone, yet it is not to be doubted that the consecration and administration of both bread and wine uniformly went together; in strict accordance with the injunction of our blessed Lord at the institution of the sacrament, "Take, eat,

this is my body :" " drink ye all of this, for this is my blood <sup>1</sup> :" and as is required to be understood by the language of St. Paul, who, remonstrating with the Corinthians upon the subject of the sacrament, evidently supposes that they did both " eat of that bread and drink of that cup <sup>2</sup>."

How conformable the principles of our national Church are in this particular to those of the primitive Church, I need hardly remind you. Her sense of the great benefit and importance of this sacrament appears from her catechetical instruction to her children, that it, as well as the other sacrament, is " generally necessary to salvation," and from the fact of her having considered the denial of one portion of the sacramental elements to the laity, as one among the numerous corruptions which rendered necessary her separation from the Church of Rome : and her anxiety, that this benefit should be experienced by all her members, appears from her positive injunction upon " every parishioner to communicate three times at the least in every year <sup>3</sup> ;" from her earnest admonition to them to " consider with themselves how great injury they do unto God, and how sore punishment hangeth over their heads, when they wilfully abstain from the Lord's table ;" and from her most affectionate exhortation, by the mouth of

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvi. 26—28.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 24—28.

<sup>3</sup> Rubrick at the end of the Communion Service.

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her ministers, "in the name of God and in Christ's behalf," that all men, "as they love their own salvation, will be partakers of this holy communion<sup>1</sup>."

These most perspicuous expressions of the Church of England are founded upon precepts and assertions, almost equally perspicuous, of our Saviour Christ himself: at one time commanding the celebration of the sacrament; at others affirming its spiritual efficacy and necessity. So that in fact it is difficult to comprehend, on what rational ground he, who calls himself a member of the Christian Church in general, or of the Church of England in particular, can justify a practice, so directly opposed to the words of Christ: himself, and of the Church the authorised interpreter of Christian doctrine, as a verbal denial of the necessity of the sacrament, or an actual estrangement of himself from partaking in it. Yet the former practice, we know, is one of the distinctions of a modern sect, to which allusion has before been made; and the latter prevails to a very deplorable extent among the members of our own congregations. God grant that both the misguided wanderer from his Church, and the lukewarm and inconsistent member of it, may be brought at length to a better mind! The primitive Christians, as

<sup>1</sup> Exhortation to be used when the Minister shall see the people negligent to come to the holy Communion.

we have seen, "continued stedfastly" in the observance of this sacred ordinance. Indeed they considered the privilege of participating in it as one of the greatest blessings they enjoyed, and the deprivation of it as one of the greatest losses they could suffer, as in fact it was the severest penalty which the governors of the Church judged that they were able to inflict. Our Church esteems of it not less highly. Let him, who wilfully neglects it, and, in the language of her pathetick exhortation, "separates from his brethren, who come to feed on the banquet of that most heavenly food," weigh well the actual character, and the probable consequences, of that his irreverent neglect. Let him reflect, whether it is not equivalent, not only to a virtual renunciation of his Protestant privileges, but at the same time to a virtual excommunication of himself from the Church of Christ: in other words, whether, by refusing to partake of the signs of Christ's body and blood, he is not rejecting his interest in the things signified; and therewithal renouncing his title to that present grace and future salvation, to that remission of sins, and sanctification of the Spirit, and resurrection to eternal life and glory, for the purchase of which the body of Christ was broken, and the blood of Christ was shed.

<sup>1</sup> Exhortation as above.

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Lastly, the primitive Christians “continued stedfastly in prayers.” That this is spoken of publick prayers, is evident from the context. And the best comment upon the passage is probably that direction in St. Paul’s first epistle to Timothy, where the Apostle, instructing his son in the faith concerning his government of the Ephesian Church, thus particularly points to the subject of devotion. “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men ; for kings, and for all that are in authority ; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty<sup>1</sup>.” In this exhortation we may observe the priority of dignity which the Apostle assigns to prayer, as the principal and most noble part of that duty, for which religious assemblies are held, “I exhort therefore first of all :” the various parts, of which he considers devotion to consist, namely, “supplications” for the averting of all things hurtful, “prayers” for the procuring of all good things which we want, “intercessions” for others, as well as for ourselves, and “thanksgivings” for mercies already received : the universal charity, which should accompany the devotions of Christians, in that they are required to pray for the welfare of “all men :” the spirit of dutiful respect, which the Gospel teaches to-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

wards rulers, for whom, though at that time they were heathens, Christians were nevertheless instructed to pray, as for the vicegerents of God, and his ministers for the good of his people: and the end and object of devotion, which, like that of Christianity itself, is stated to be “the leading of quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.” In addition to these things, which relate to the substance of the Apostle’s exhortation, we may observe with reference to the manner of putting it into execution, that the worship, here required by him to be offered, was manifestly under episcopal superintendence and control; for otherwise why should the instructions be addressed to Timothy, the Bishop of the Church of Ephesus? and that it was to be comprised in certain set forms of prayer; otherwise how could Timothy provide, that devotions such as are here enumerated should be offered in all churches and congregations under his inspection and jurisdiction? “Undoubtedly,” remarks a learned divine, “the primitive Catholick Church understood this to be the meaning of the Apostle. Hence in all the Churches of Christ over the world, however distant from each other, we find set forms of publick prayers, suited and conformable to this direction of St. Paul. And indeed, if we consult all the ancient liturgies extant at this day, we shall

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find that they were all framed and composed according to this rule<sup>1</sup>."

Agreeable to this primitive practice, as illustrated by the directions of the Apostle, is the practice of our national Church. If we look to the structure of the devotions, in which she requires her members to unite, we find them not regulated by the varying caprice, or exposed to innovation from the crude conceptions, of an ignorant or enthusiastick individual, but duly and definitely modelled by the collective wisdom of her venerable Bishops at the Reformation, upon the principles of Scriptural truth, and according to examples transmitted from the times of primitive antiquity. If we look to her sense of the comparative importance of this department of religious duty, we find it distinctly marked in the preference which she assigns to it above preaching, constituting the former, but not the latter, an invariable and indispensable part of her publick services, and never permitting her congregations to be instructed from the pulpit, unless the appointed prayers shall previously have been offered from the desk. If we look to the particulars of which her liturgy consists, we find it richly supplied with all those materials, which the Apostle enumerates as fit to con-

<sup>1</sup> Bp. Bull's Sermon on 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

tribute towards the formation of a liturgy in the primitive Church. I must not detain you by dwelling on particular illustrations and examples. Let it suffice to observe in brief, that whether we have regard to the several divisions, into which prayer may be distributed, or to the several persons, for whom it should be offered, or to the present temper of mind, which ought to accompany it, or to the permanent effect, which it should produce on the heart and life; there is no purpose of publick devotion, for which provision is not abundantly made in the diversified and comprehensive liturgy of our national Church: a composition so pure in its spirit and principles, and so impregnated (if I may express myself in this manner) with all the prominent doctrines of our holy religion, and conveying its sentiments withal in such appropriate simplicity, harmony, and energy of language, that it may be well described as concentrating in its devout aspirations the essence of the Gospel, and the holy men who composed it may be well believed to have been actuated by the Holy Spirit of God.

I have thus endeavoured to draw out and present to your notice the particulars which are described in the text as characteristick of the primitive Christians, and to show how they are reflected in the corresponding features of the religious esta-

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blishment of this country : at the same time it has been my object to intermix such incidental remarks as appeared best calculated to illustrate and enforce the several topicks, and to refute the cavils of modern sectarian objectors. Notwithstanding the large demand which I have been compelled to make upon your patience, I am well aware that the investigation has been still very superficial and incomplete. Yet perhaps I may indulge a hope, that it has not been altogether useless ; but that it may have excited feelings of higher respect and stronger attachment for our apostolical and venerable Church ; which in her national capacity we confidently believe to be "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." But my purpose will not have been answered, if the subject shall be suffered to pass away from your minds with no other impression than that of a momentary interest. At no time indeed can the subject, which has this morning occupied us, be unfit for a minister of the Church to propose to the thoughts of a congregation, or for the members of that congregation to consider with very earnest attention. There are times however, when that, which is never improper, becomes a most seasonable and imperative duty. Such a time I apprehend to be the present. Whilst hereticks and schismaticks, whilst scepticks and enthusiasts, whilst cold-blooded philosophists and zealots with-

out knowledge, are perpetually making the Church the object of their assaults ; whilst the violence of avowed hostility is boldly exerted for the overthrow of the citadel, and artifice employs every secret machination in order to undermine it ; it then more especially behoves, not the watchman only, but every one interested in her behalf, to “ walk about our Sion, and go round about her ; to mark well her bulwarks, and tell the towers thereof<sup>1.</sup>”

“ Her foundations,” we stedfastly believe, “ are upon the holy hills<sup>2.</sup>” But we ask not of you a blind acquiescence in that belief. We exhort you to do as we have done. Search the Scriptures : examine the records of ecclesiastical antiquity : compare with them the principles and the practices of our national Church. If after a dispassionate and patient investigation you conscientiously believe her to be a traitress to Him, whose honour she professes to maintain : if her sacraments be of human institution ; if her doctrines have their origin in human conceit ; if her ministers be unauthorised intruders into their sacred office ; if her liturgy be a remnant of superstition, or an inanimate and unedifying form : come out from the midst of her, and be ye separate ; renounce, forsake, abjure her. But if on the other hand you are rationally persuaded, that she is indeed a holy

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xlvi. 11, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm lxxxvii. 1.

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Church, not unworthy of being accounted “the Church of the living God,” cherish her as you would the apple of your eye. For her sake, for the sake of her Redeemer, for the sake of your own salvation, cling to her, and desert her not. If her sacraments be Christ’s ordinances, receive them as the water of salvation, and the bread of life: if her doctrines be evangelical, continue to hold fast her forms of sound words: if her priesthood be apostolical, persevere in seeking knowledge at their lips: if her liturgy be scriptural, after that way, however misnamed by others, “worship ye the God of your fathers<sup>1</sup>. ” He who “loved the Church, and gave himself for her<sup>2</sup>,” and appointed her to be the ark of salvation, will in no wise abandon her “amidst the raging of the sea, and the noise of his waves, and the madness of the people. Therefore will we not fear though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea: though the waters thereof rage and swell; and though the mountains shake at the tempest of the same. God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed: God shall help her, and that right early<sup>3</sup>. ”

I conclude with a collect from our admirable liturgy. “O Lord, we beseech thee, let thy con-

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxiv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. v. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm xlvi. 2, 3, 5.

tinual pity cleanse and defend thy Church ; and because it cannot continue in safety without thy succour, preserve it evermore by thy help and goodness, through Jesus Christ our Lord : to whom with Thee, O Father, and Thee, O Holy Ghost, one Lord and God Almighty, be ascribed the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.  
Amen<sup>1</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> Collect for the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

## **DISCOURSE IV.**

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### **THE CHURCH DISTINGUISHED FROM MODERN RELIGIOUS SECTS.**

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**Acts iv. 32.**

**And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.**

THE concord and unity of the future members of the Christian Church were an object of earnest solicitude with its Divine Founder and his inspired messengers. Together with anxious injunctions and intreaties on his disciples to "love one another<sup>1</sup>," our blessed Lord combined his almost-dying prayer to his Father, not for his Apostles only, but "for them also which should believe on him through their word, that they all might be one<sup>2</sup>." Accordingly, "the multitude of them that" at first "believed were of one heart and of one soul<sup>3</sup>:" and,

<sup>1</sup> John xv. 12.

<sup>2</sup> John xvii. 20, 21.

<sup>3</sup> Acts iv. 32.

under the primitive government of the Apostles, such as the Lord added to the Church “continued with one accord<sup>1</sup>” in holy unity, and in a communion of belief and religious offices. Solemn exhortations to the early converts to “forbear one another in love, and endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace<sup>2</sup>;” intreaties and adjurations “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that they would all speak the same thing<sup>3</sup>;” “that they would be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment;” prayers to God in their behalf, to “grant them to be like-minded one towards another according to Christ Jesus, that they might with one mind and one mouth glorify God<sup>4</sup>:” formed impressive subjects of apostolical admonition. Whilst, as the borders of the Church were enlarged, mutual salutations and greetings between its distant parts and members were pledges of the general harmony which prevailed throughout the whole.

On the other hand, violations of the unity of the Church were deprecated and condemned by its inspired governors. St. John cautioned his disciples against such as would “seduce them from the truth<sup>5</sup>:” St. Jude warned believers to “beware of those who separate themselves<sup>6</sup>:” St. Paul be-

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 46.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 3.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. i. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. xv. 5.

<sup>5</sup> 1 John ii. 26.

<sup>6</sup> Jude 19.

sought his converts, that there might “be no divisions among them<sup>1</sup>. ” Schisms and divisions were denounced by the Apostles, under the different modes, of members of the Church forming separate parties or communions, and attaching themselves at will to particular ministers or preachers, instead of uniting in one Christian communion<sup>2</sup>: of their being “ seduced from the truth<sup>3</sup>, ” “ not enduring sound doctrine, and heaping to themselves teachers,” such as, instead of delivering to them the sound word of God, would flatter their corrupt opinions and inclinations<sup>4</sup>: of their instituting new rites and adopting new practices in religious ministrations<sup>5</sup>: and of their setting themselves up in opposition to the spiritual authority of their lawful superiors<sup>6</sup>, and violating the subordination of teaching, ministering, and governing, originally appointed in the Church<sup>7</sup>. The divisions or schisms St. Paul characterises as the effect of men’s “own lusts<sup>8</sup>; and enumerates them among “the works of the flesh,” such as “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, murders, drunkenness, revellings<sup>9</sup>. ” And the persons, who were guilty of these schisms, he describes as “car-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 10.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. i. 12. Jude 19.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John ii. 26.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 3.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 18—21.

<sup>6</sup> Jude 11.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 25.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Gal. v. 19—21.

nal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men<sup>1</sup>?" whilst others, against whom the like offences are alleged, are censured by St. Peter and St. Jude, as "presumptuous, self-willed; filthy dreamers, who despise dominion, and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities; having perished in the gainsaying of Core; sensual, having not the Spirit<sup>2</sup>."

Such testimonies of our Lord's will might have been expected to exercise a perpetual influence on the hearts, and minds, and actions of his followers. It is, however, much to be remarked, and no less surely to be deplored, that these recommendations of unity on the one hand, and these discouragements of schism on the other, have among many professors of Christianity in this age and kingdom no more effect, than if they had been repealed and blotted out from the book of God's law. Such persons seem to think themselves at full liberty to introduce into Christ's body every form of discord and division with impunity, as if schism were an act of perfect indifference and perfectly free from offence, indeed of being in manifest opposition to Christ's will: and to erect themselves into independent societies, churches they fondly call them, as if Christ had

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 10. Jude 8. 11. 19.

not instituted one holy Catholick Church of his own, wherein men were to live in love and unity, and finally to be saved. Concord, in a word, and unity have no existence amongst us: whilst, instead of that “communion of saints,” which cannot subsist without fellowship of belief, and of government, and of religious rites and ordinances, the only bond which connects all the professors of the Gospel in this kingdom, those of course I mean who are dissociated from the Church of Rome, is **AN UNDEFINED AND HETEROGENEOUS PROTESTANTISM**, consisting solely of a renunciation of the Romish errors, but possessing no other positive qualities common to the various persons or bodies who profess it.

How imperfect and slight a bond of Christian union is supplied by this general appellation; how poor a substitute it affords for that concord and unity, when “the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul;” how feeble a guard for the counteraction of “schisms and divisions;” is too truly and too sadly told by the History of the Church in this kingdom, from the period of the Reformation to the present day: nor less by the fact, that under the general name of Protestants are comprised the members of our own apostolical and scriptural Church; and that under the same name are comprised those numerous sects, which, being like, ourselves, opposed to the

Romish corruptions and estranged from that communion, and thus entertaining in common with ourselves certain religious antipathies, are nevertheless not in communion with that true part of the Church of Christ, established amongst us by God's good providence: but, greatly as they are at the same time at variance with each other, are in a state of separation, or of dissent, or of both dissent and separation, from the Church; condemning her doctrinal decisions, maligning her hierarchy, repudiating her ritual, renouncing or innovating in her worship.

For the truth's sake, and in justice to our national Church, and therein to the one holy Catholick Church of Christ of which she is a true part, and in honour of her Divine Founder, it is right that the character of the Church, as distinguished from those of different sectarian societies, with which, by means of that common appellation already mentioned, she is apt to be confounded, should be understood by her members. With this view, my brethren, I would now submit to your consideration the sort of relation in which we stand to other Protestants; the peculiar position in that respect taken at the Reformation, and still maintained by the Church; and the conduct, which it behoves the ministers and other members of the Church to pursue, in reference to the differences between

her, and those who dissent or separate themselves from her communion.

I. Now, the terms “Protestant” and “Protestantism,” by which numerous large and important classes of professors of the Gospel are denominated, convey, however, a very indefinite description of those who are comprised under the denomination. “Protestant” is in fact a negative, rather than a positive term: it describes rather what the persons so denominated deny, than what they admit; it represents their disallowance of certain doctrines and practices, which they think to be improperly ingrafted on a belief of the Christian verity, but it does not set forth the doctrines and practices which they hold, as constituents and vehicles of the truth. In short, it represents them, as *protesting* against certain corruptions and errors, which characterize the Church of Rome; but it does not convey an idea of the particular religious sentiments respectively, which each class of Protestants maintains, as characterizing itself.

The position may be made good and illustrated by a reference to examples, concerning the constitution and government of the Church; the interpretation of the rule of faith; the ordinances of religion; and the modes of publick worship.

1. Thus, Protestants are agreed in disallowing

the existence, asserted by the Romish Church, of seven distinct orders of the ministry, as of apostolical institution; and in repudiating the claim of the Bishop of Rome to supremacy in the Church of Christ, and his right of jurisdiction beyond the limits of his own proper authority. But, agreeing in these negations, they are not positively agreed as to the *polity* and *government of the Church*. For, whilst some contend for a smaller number, but still a plurality, of distinct orders, as of apostolical institution, invested with distinct and different powers; others maintain a single clerical degree, and a parity of power inherent in its several members, thus holding the root, but not the order, of the Catholick Church:—whilst some admit only clerical orders in the Church, others unite with these an order of lay-governors:—whilst some maintain the obligation of unity among different believers in the same country, so as to constitute of all one national Church; others regard each separate congregation of believers as forming an independent and complete Church of itself:—whilst some contend for the necessity of the ministerial character being transmitted from the first ages of the Gospel in uninterrupted succession, and through a legitimate channel, and of its being thus conferred on individuals by an outward as well as inward call; others esteem no such transmission necessary, holding neither the

root nor order of apostolical ministration, and others maintain an inward call to be sufficient, and others again reject the ministerial character, as constituting a distinct class of men set apart for sacred offices, at once and altogether.

2. Thus, again, Protestants are agreed in disallowing the assertion of the Romish Church, that the holy Scriptures do not contain of themselves all things necessary for salvation, her addition of other traditionary doctrines to those which the holy Scriptures contain, and her claim to be the sole authoritative and infallible interpreter of the Word of God. But they are not so fully agreed amongst themselves, as to the *modes* of arriving at and maintaining the *true sense of the holy Scriptures*. For, whilst some are willing to be assisted in their judgment, under the blessing of divine illumination, by the aids of human learning, by the writings of the earlier Christians bearing testimony to the sentiments of the primitive Church, and by the decrees of the first and general councils of the Church ; others refuse all guidance, save the special enlightening of the Holy Spirit, and the interpretation of Scripture by itself :—whilst some adhere to the use of certain creeds and confessions of faith, as embodying from ancient times in compendious summaries the chief truths of holy Scripture ; others reject entirely such creeds and confessions, as human infringe-

ments on the truth of God, and on the Christian liberty of believers :—whilst some insist on an uniformity of doctrine in the ministers of the Gospel, to be secured by personal professions and declarations ; others leave the inculcating, of what each may deem religious truth, to the unrestricted judgment and persuasion of the several teachers :—whilst some take means for uniting all the members of their community in the avowed and accredited belief of the Church ; others contend for the uncontrolled exercise of private judgment in every individual.

3. Thus, again, as to the Christian ordinances, Protestants are agreed in disallowing the five supernumerary sacraments of the Romish Church, her superfluous and fanciful rites in the ministration of the sacrament of Baptism, her doctrine of transubstantiation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and the superstitious and idolatrous practices, as well as other erroneous articles of belief, which are connected with the fundamental delusion of Rome concerning that holy sacrament. But they are not agreed as to the necessity, the nature, or the ministration, of *the two sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper* :—some alleging the general necessity of these two sacraments to salvation, others considering them of inferior obligation, others dispensing with them altogether, as not ordained for the use of Christians of modern

times;—some regarding them as means of spiritual grace, others as merely initiative or commemorative ordinances;—some maintaining the fitness of baptizing infants, others denying the fitness of such baptism, and repeating baptism, if occasion serve, in mature age on those who have been so baptized;—some allowing lay-persons to minister baptism, others restricting the ministration to a clergyman;—some approving of its ministration with certain particular accompaniments, others disapproving of those accompaniments;—some asserting the necessity of immersion, others being satisfied with affusion only or aspersion;—some requiring a frequent ministration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, others being contented with a rare celebration of it;—some appointing it to be ministered with circumstances of appropriate devotion, others being contented with a form of less devotional solemnity.

4. Lastly, with respect to the *modes of publick worship*, Protestants are agreed in disallowing the use of an unknown tongue for religious services, as practised by the Church of Rome, her incongruous mixture of legendary tales and monkish fiction with the instruction of holy Scripture, and the many superstitious, absurd, unedifying, and profane usages which desecrate her celebration of holy rites. But they are not agreed as to the religious rites and ceremonies, by which their own

ministrations of sacred offices are respectively distinguished. Whilst some approve of the use of a precomposed and set form of prayer, others prefer that the minister should be regulated only by general directions in his conduct of the devotions of the congregation ; others that he should be left entirely unfettered by human prescriptions and injunctions ; others that every individual member should be permitted to offer his own prayers in abstracted and silent devotion, or to speak openly under the supposed immediate dictation of the Holy Spirit :—whilst some unite the congregation at large with the minister in a joint or alternate expression of adoration ; others confine the offering of prayer to the minister alone, and exclude the congregation from an outward participation in his devotions :—whilst by some the reading of God's Word is made a part of the publick service, and for example of life and instruction of manners the apocryphal books are ordained to be read in parts, in addition to the pure Word of God ; by others the use of the apocryphal books is condemned, and the reading even of holy Scripture is omitted :—whilst with some the exercises of publick worship are varied by an interchange of different component parts, with others they consist of more uniform materials, and are conducted with more simplicity and sameness of manner :—some unite all the members of the same commu-

nion by the use of the same liturgy in the same worship, however numerous may be the congregations; others, by the latitude permitted to each minister, cause their worship to assume various forms, as numerous as their several congregations.

Thus it appears sufficiently, my brethren, that, however Protestants may be agreed together in disallowing the errors and corruptions of the Church of Rome, they have their own points of disagreement which distinguish them from each other: so that, as was before observed, the term "Protestant" is rather negative than positive; indicative of what the persons, so described, do not believe, rather than what they do; and accordingly not representing a body of Christians united in a mutual consent upon the truths and ordinances of their religion, except so far as it consists in a mutual protestation against the Church of Rome. Connected in a certain degree by a concurrence in Anti-Romish sentiments, in other respects they stand more or less aloof from each other, as so many discordant and independent parties: unhappily bearing a very faint resemblance to that beautiful picture delineated by the Evangelist, when "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul," when they "met together daily with one accord in the temple;" and "lifted up their voices," in prayer and praise

to God, "with one accord." This statement is made, as the statement of matters of fact, too notorious I fear to be questioned. It would easily admit of fuller and more particular exemplification. But to your reflections I may safely leave the supply, if needed, of any deficiency ; and proceed with the subject, on account of which it has been requisite to touch on the foregoing discrepancies.

II. In referring to any denominations of Protestants not of our communion, or in citing the peculiarities of any other Protestants, however distinguished by their peculiar denomination, I do not mean to be more particular. To particularize is not needed for my argument : to abstain from particularizing may be to avoid occasion of offence. But with respect to that Protestant part of the Catholick Church, to which we, "my brethren, belong, something more is needed, and may, I trust, inoffensively be said. I observe therefore, that at the time of the Reformation, with the moderation of true wisdom, which can distinguish between use and abuse, between essential good and accidental evil, with a decent and discriminating reverence for the example of primitive ecclesiastical antiquity, and with an incorruptible devotion to the pure Word of God, the Protestant Church of England,

followed by the Protestant Church of Ireland, took up her position, which she still maintains, or rather which the united Protestant Church of the two countries still maintains, on certain questions to which I have just adverted.

1. First, as to the *polity and government of the Church*, she asserted, upon the authority of Holy Scripture and ancient authors, the existence from the Apostles' time of "these orders of ministers in Christ's Church, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, which offices were evermore held in such reverent estimation, that no man might presume to execute any of them, unless he were first called, tried, examined, and known to have such qualities as are requisite for the same; and also by publick prayer, with imposition of hands, were approved and admitted thereto by lawful authority." She allowed "no man to be accounted or taken for a lawful minister in the Church of England" of either order, unless by "episcopal consecration or ordination." She pronounced it "not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of publick preaching or ministering the sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called and sent to execute the same: and that those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be called and chosen to the work by men, who have publick authority given unto them in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's

vineyard." She required of candidates for the ministry, that they should "think themselves," not only "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon them the office," but "truly called also according to the due order of this Church and realm." She invested the Bishop with a discretionary power of admitting candidates to the ministry; and of investigating and correcting the conduct of ministers within his diocese. She placed the members of the two inferior orders under the obligation of "reverent obedience to their Ordinary and other chief ministers of the Church." She limited them in the exercise of their ministry to "the congregation, where they should be appointed thereunto by the Bishop;" and she made them responsible to him for their conduct therein. She pronounced the severest censure upon any who should "affirm the Church of England to be not a true and apostolical Church;" or who should "impugn her publick worship of God;" or "her Articles of Religion;" or "her rites and ceremonies;" or "her government by Archbishops, Bishops, Deans, Archdeacons, and the rest that bear office for the same;" or "her form of ordination and consecration;" or who should "separate themselves from her communion, and combine themselves together in a new brotherhood, accounting the Christians who are conformable to the doctrine;

government, rites, and ceremonies of the Church of England to be profane, and unmeet for them to join with in Christian profession :" or who should thereafter " affirm or maintain, that there were within the realm other meetings, assemblies, or congregations, than such as by the laws of the land were held and allowed, which might rightly challenge to themselves the name of true and lawful Churches." She directed her people to acknowledge it among " the good gifts of Almighty God," that " by his Divine Providence He had appointed divers orders of ministers in his Church :" she directed them to pray Him to " guide and govern the minds of his servants, the Bishops and Pastors of his flock, in the choice of fit persons to serve in the sacred ministry of his Church ;" to " illuminate all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons with true knowledge and understanding of his Word ;" and together with these his ministers to bless " all congregations committed to their charge :" and she directed them to pray the good Lord to " deliver them from all false doctrine, heresy, and schism ;" schism especially being that sin, which St. Paul so earnestly deprecates in his first epistle to the Corinthians ; and which consists in a violation of the unity of the Church, either by needlessly separating from it, or by opposing the lawful authority of its rulers, by bringing its ministers into a state of rivalry and con-

tention with each other, by introducing or fomenting dissensions and divisions among its members, and by innovating in its ministrations and forms of worship.

2. Secondly, as to the *doctrine of holy Scripture*, which she distinctly affirmed to "contain all things necessary to salvation," to the exclusion of all extraneous instruction, the Church of England nevertheless adopted, as interpretations and expositions of the word of God, "the three creeds, the Nicene, the Athanasien, and what is commonly called the Apostles' Creed," the records of the sentiments of the Catholick Church from the earliest times; affirming that they "ought thoroughly to be received and believed, for they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture." She claimed to the Church "power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith," but always with the provision that her "ordinances be not contrary to God's word written," and that her "expounding of one place of Scripture be not repugnant to another." She pledged her ministers to a "daily and diligent reading and weighing of the holy Scriptures" and to "diligence in all such studies, as help to the knowledge of the same." Meanwhile, "for the avoiding of diversities of opinions, and for the establishing of consent touching true religion," she constructed certain articles to which she required all her clergy to subscribe,

and, to declare thereto "their unsighed assent and consent, acknowledging all and every the articles contained therein; to be agreeable to the word of God." The fundamental principles and chief truths of religion she embodied in her liturgy, as a guide and a safeguard to her people at large: and she specially provided a catechism for the instruction of her children in the same truths and principles: holding forth to all her members by these various provisions, that the essence of "the Catholick faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;" and that "we believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ."

3. Again, as to the *sacraments* the Church affirmed, that "Baptism and the Lord's Supper are generally necessary to salvation;" that they are "outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace," respectively, that is, of regeneration, and of Christ's body and blood; that they are "means for our receiving the same grace, and pledges to assure us" of its being received. Explicit in her doctrine concerning them, she was also careful that they be duly ministered, after the example of primitive usage, and according to Christ's ordinance. She decreed "the baptism of infants," pronouncing that it "is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ." She appointed that they

be baptized publicly in the Church, as more conducive to general edification, unless in cases of "great and reasonable cause and necessity;" in which cases, "if need compel," she provided and enjoined a particular private form, to be used by "the minister of the parish, or in his absence any other lawful minister;" and required that the baptized be afterwards "received into the congregation" by a special form for that purpose provided. She enjoined that on those occasions, as on occasions of publick baptism, "sureties" should appear to make answer for the infant, as to its Christian engagements and obligations, and to stipulate for its future Christian education. She specified certain qualifications for these sureties, as that "they be not the parents of the child," and that "they have been partakers of the holy Communion." She followed up the ministration of baptism with a formal "reception of the baptized into the congregation of Christ's flock," accompanied by "signing him with the sign of the cross, in token that thereafter he should not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified." Finally, she directed, that "the children be sent" in due time to their parochial "minister," for catechetical religious instruction in that particular summary which she set forth for the purpose; and "at years of discretion to the bishop," that they might partake in the apostolical rite of confirmation. Of the holy

Communion she required "every parishioner to partake at least three times in every year;" and she directed her clergy to "minister it so often and at such times," as might enable their parishioners to comply with that requisition: a requisition and a direction, which obviously imply a more frequent ministration of it, in accordance with her evident desire that the people should more frequently communicate. In order to a proper preparation, she enjoined warning to be given beforehand of the communion, and an exhortation to a worthy participation. In order to correct a non-participation, she enjoined another exhortation inforcing the duty of communicating. "For a signification of our humble and grateful acknowledgment of the benefits of Christ therein given to all worthy receivers, and for the avoiding of such profanation and disorder in the holy communion as might otherwise ensue, she ordained that the communicants should receive the same kneeling." And, while she directed her ministers "diligently, from time to time, to exhort their parishioners to the often receiving of the holy communion, when publickly administered in the Church," for the comfort of those, who might by sickness be disabled from coming thither, she provided for and directed its private celebration.

4. Lastly, as to her *public worship* in general, the

Church of England provided "a prescript form" in her "Book of Common Prayer and administration of the sacraments, and other rites and ceremonies of the Church;" and for the use of the whole and of all the parts of this she gave particular directions. By specifick rules, and by the very character and composition of the several parts of the service, she endeavoured to unite the clergy and the laity in the use of this common form of prayer. She defined what portions were to be "read by the minister alone," and in what he was to be "followed, or accompanied, by the people." She made her rules so plain and easy to be understood, that in general it is hardly possible to misunderstand them, yet for the solution of any "doubt which might arise" concerning the contents of the book, she provided by directing a reference to the judgment of "the bishop of the diocese;" and she made her rules so agreeable to reason and holy Scripture, that no good cause can exist, either in minister or people, for not observing them. She provided for becoming decency and solemnity in the reading of Divine service and the administering of the sacraments, by assigning to the officiating clergy an appropriate dress, which she required them to wear in common with the hoods of their academical degrees. And she made it the duty of her ministers, and she laid them under a solemn and express stipulation and engagement,

to, "observe the orders, rites, and ceremonies prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer, without diminishing in any respect, or adding anything, in the matter or form thereof."

This detail of particulars may serve to show the character of the Church of England, or more properly, the United Church of England and Ireland, as a distinct and definite portion of Protestant professors of the Gospel, of the reformed part of the Catholick Church. As we saw in the first place the want of agreement amongst Protestants concerning ecclesiastical polity, the interpretation of holy Scripture, the sacraments of Christ, and Divine worship, so we now more especially see the views entertained and propounded by our own Church on these several heads: and without mention made of any particular denominations, it will readily occur to you, my brethren, that there are certain Protestant sects, which, in some or other of these views, do not symbolize with, rather expressly dissent from, the Church; and are thus formed into various independent societies, of which it is sufficient to observe, that the different denomination of each fixes on it the character of not being in unity with that Church, which we on solid and satisfactory grounds believe to be a true part of the One Holy Catholick Church of Christ.

III.—Looking then to a practical inference from these observations, what is the conduct which it behoves us to pursue in relation to the differences which prevail amongst the several denominations of Protestants, and concerning which the Church of England, and Ireland has clearly manifested her mind? i. e. the following points:

1. Of those, who are in the situation of ministers of the Church, the course is plainly marked out by the questions proposed to them, and by the answers, which they have given, on being admitted to their several ministrations. And in pursuance of those engagements it behoves us, in the conduct of our ministry, *not* to bend our principles or adapt our practices and our teaching to the prepossessions of others, so as to countenance “schisms and divisions” among Christians, and to encourage in their error those who dissent or separate themselves from the Church: *not* to consider the differences between us as of no moment, to treat them with insensibility and unconcern, and thus to promote in our congregations the same indiscriminating carelessness, and give them and others cause to suppose that the Church is, or that we think her to be in error: *not* to compromise her claim to be regarded, by virtue of her legitimate Episcopacy, as the true Apostolical Church of this country: *not* to fail of “holding fast” her “forms of sound words,” the barriers and bulwarks of her

profession of the true Catholick faith : *not* to deprecate her sacraments, as Christ's appointed means of grace, or abate the reverential forms which she has enjoined for their ministration : *not* to forego or mutilate her scriptural liturgy, nor mar “the beauty of holiness” in her worship of God. On the contrary, it behoves us, so far as lieth in us, to bring those who dissent or separate themselves from the Church, to “an agreement of the faith and knowledge of God,” and to a communion in his worship : at least to encourage the members of the Church in being “of one heart and of one soul,” and in “lifting up their voices to God with one accord.” And in order to this, it behoves us to stand up in defence of the Church, to the ministry of which we have been admitted ; to submit ourselves to those governours of the Church, to whom we have promised obedience ; and not only “always so to minister in our own persons with all faithful diligence the doctrine and the sacraments and the discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church and realm hath received the same, according to the commandment of God ;” but to “teach our people” likewise the same sacred lessons :— to “teach” you, how apostolical in its origin, how primitive in its first usage, how uninterrupted in its transmission, how universal in its ancient extent, how unrivalled in its correspondence with the Word

of God, is our *ecclesiastical polity*, our *episcopal form of Church government*; to “teach” you the venerable antiquity, the Catholick adoption and perpetual maintenance, the utility and safety, above all the scriptural purity, of *our creeds and confessions of faith*; to “teach” you the nature, the uses, the benefits, the engagements of *the sacraments* as retained by the Church, the conformity of her doctrine concerning them to the truth of holy writ, and of her celebration of them to ancient practice; to “teach” you the excellence, the beauties, and the advantages of *her liturgy*, how agreeable it is to reason, how warranted by scriptural precedent, how illustrative of apostolical precept, how unexceptionable and admirable in all its rites and ceremonies, how conducive to ecclesiastical decency and order, to man’s edification and God’s glory; and to imbue you withal with a grateful sense of the high privilege which specially belongs to you as members of the Church, in the possession of such a liturgy, and to train you to the understanding and the prescribed use of it:—in a word, to “teach” you, not merely a negation of Popery, nor a general indefinite Protestantism, nor the distinguishing tenets and usages of any Protestant sect; but the *polity*, the *doctrines*, the *ordinances*, and the *forms of worship*, as based on the warrant of holy Scripture, which distinguish *our apostolical part* of the Universal Church.

It is to this conduct that we, the ministers of the Church, are pledged by our promises at ordination; and it is this conduct therefore which it behoves us to pursue. You, my brethren, at the same time it behoves to listen with willing minds to our teaching: that so by God's grace you may be assisted in forming a reasonable perception of your condition, as members of the Church of England and Ireland: that you may be impressed with a persuasion of her excellence, and bound in a conscientious attachment to her constitution, her doctrines, and her services; that you may thereby keep her implanted in your minds and hearts, your judgment and affection: and that thus secured in your attachment to our national Church, you may be built up and established in the true faith and communion of the one Holy Catholick and Apostolick Church of Christ, as most perfectly represented in this kingdom by our reformed and scriptural part of it: and thus may be preserved by God's mercy from partaking in the sin and the danger of those schisms and divisions, which rend the body of Christ, and may have the happiness of contributing to God's honour, and to the Church's good, and to your own spiritual welfare, by studying to "keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

For every one indeed, who "names the name of Christ," let us not fail to cherish feelings of

good will extend to those who honestly seek the truth, and conscientiously act according to their judgment, though they do not belong to our communion, let us conduct ourselves with forbearance and courtesy, with charity and respect. But in tenderness for the persons of those who separate themselves from the Church, let us not forget the essential character of the act;—let us not forget that religious discord and disunion are positive infractions of the Divine law!—let us not forget that by that law religious agreement and unity are commanded! Be it then, my brethren, our earnest endeavour and prayer, that “we all may be one;” obeying the will, and hoping for the commendation, of that gracious Being, whose favour above all things we should seek to procure; as we should be above all things studious of his glory; whilst we labour to promote the welfare of that Church, in which we continually pray “that He will deliver us from all false doctrine, heresy, and schism;” and which we continually beseech Him to visit with “the healthful Spirit of his grace;” that Church, which we humbly but confidently believe, to be an Apostolical, a Scriptural, a Spiritual, and a Holy Church; “the Church,” in its national capacity, “of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

O Almighty God, who hast built thy Church

upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the head cornerstone: grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Collect for St. Simon and St. Jude's day.

## DISCOURSE V.

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### THE CHURCH'S JUDGMENT ON THE NECESSITY OF HOLDING THE CATHOLICK FAITH.

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MARK xvi. 15, 16.

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved : but he that believeth not shall be damned.

It is the judgment of the Church, established by the good Providence of God in this country, that wherever the Christian religion is made known to mankind, it is necessary for all persons to believe it ; to believe it "whole and undefiled," in its integrity and in its purity, as they value a participation in that salvation, which Christianity announces and confers. The truth of this judgment should seem to be unquestionable with all those who admit the authority of holy Scripture : for it is the obvious result, or rather it is the very purport itself, of our blessed Saviour's declaration :

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when, having commissioned his Apostles to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," He apprized them of the twofold consequence of their preaching; "he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned." As however there are some even amongst the professors of Christianity, who dispute the truth of this judgment; as the subject itself is evidently one of the greatest moment; and as the character of the Church is involved in the decision of the question; your attention, I think, will be not ill bestowed upon a more particular consideration of the scriptural authority upon which this judgment rests.

Different ages are distinguished from each other by peculiar modes of thinking and acting. This variety is exemplified, not only in things indifferent and variable in their own nature, but in others, the obligations of which are peremptory, and the character fixed and permanent. The doctrines of religion and the requisitions of morality are not exempted from its influence. In these also there is a fashion, with which, according to the common propensity of human nature, we are more or less inclined to comply.

The peculiar character of the present age is sometimes denoted, perhaps not unaptly, by the term *liberality*: a term of ambiguous import, and therefore denoting a quality of questionable price.

For if by liberality be intended a generous freedom from irrational prejudices in the forming of our opinions, or a courteous and benignant manner in maintaining them, it is a quality highly to be prized, and diligently to be cultivated. But if by liberality be intended a licentiousness of sentiment, careless about the grounds of the opinions which it adopts, and indifferent to the essential distinction between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, it is a quality worthless in itself, and noxious in its consequences. In the former sense liberality is strictly agreeable to the spirit and the dictates of the Christian religion. In the latter sense it is no less manifestly at variance with them. Liberality in the former sense is exemplified in the “nobleness” of conduct of those Bereans, who, when St. Paul laid before them the truths of the Gospel, “received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether the things” preached to them “were so<sup>1</sup>:” or in the resolute and impressive, but temperate and respectful, language of St. Paul himself, when to the accusation of Festus, that “much learning had made him mad,” he replied, “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness<sup>2</sup>;” or when he answered the avowal of Agrippa, “Almost thou

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxvi. 24, 25.

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persuadest me to be a Christian," with that precatory wish, not more remarkable for its piety and Christian charity, than for its seemliness and dignity of manner, "I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds<sup>1</sup>." Of liberality in its latter sense we have an example in the contemptuous self-sufficiency of those philosophers of Athens, who "mocked" at the Apostle "when he preached of the resurrection of the dead<sup>2</sup>," and of those Greeks, to whom "Christ crucified was foolishness<sup>3</sup>:" or in the wilful insensibility of the Roman governour of Judea, when terrified as he was by the Apostle's "reasoning of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," he dismissed the preacher "till a more convenient season<sup>4</sup>," and made no other use of his opportunities of spiritual instruction and improvement than by endeavouring to render them subservient to his projects of worldly gain. In this sense of the term *liberality*, as denoting indifference to the essential distinction between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, the first preachers of Christianity were indeed the most illiberal of men: and those, who follow most strictly in the footsteps of such their predecessors, must be contented to share in their discredit.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxvi. 28, 29.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 32.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. i. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Acts xxiv. 25.

But the liberality of our day perhaps shews itself less by indifference to religion in general, than by indifference to particular modes of religion: a sort of latitudinarian, vague, and indefinite belief, which professes to acknowledge the truth of Christianity in general, but is indifferent to the particular doctrines and duties, by which, in the judgment of the well-informed Christian, Christianity is distinguished.

This species of liberality, however, is in fact no less spurious than the former, and "falsely so called." So far indeed from being an exemption from irrational prepossessions, it is rather, I apprehend, the result of inveterate and fondly cherished prejudices, which indispose the mind for an impartial investigation, and an ingenuous acknowledgment of the truth. And it were, I am persuaded, no difficult task to shew, that indifference to the peculiar tenets of Christianity in those, "who profess and call themselves Christians," instead of being the mark of a truly liberal, enlarged, and generous spirit, is on the contrary at variance with the intellectual as well as the moral graces, which are the most becoming ornament of the human mind in our present condition; and is not more consistent with the true wisdom of a rational creature, than with the humility, the charity, and the piety of a disciple of Christ.

But indeed it may be questioned, whether in-

difference to the distinguishing tenets of Christianity be intrinsically better than indifference to Christianity altogether. The true subject of the kingdom of Christ submits himself in all things to the declared will of his heavenly Master. And as that man would be a mere nominal loyalist, who, whilst he professed allegiance to his sovereign, should withhold from him the various services, which that general duty comprehends; so is he to be accounted a mere nominal Christian, who with a general profession of belief in Christ refuses to combine an acknowledgment of the several particulars, which Christ revealed, as objects of a Christian's faith.

In order, however, that we may have a more clear perception of our subject, I shall beg you to consider the character, under which Christianity, as a system of religious belief, is set forth by our blessed Lord and his Apostles; the manner in which they enforce a belief and profession of it; and the consequences which they ascribe to a contrary conduct.

I. Now the character, under which Christianity is set forth to us in holy Scripture, is that of a revelation from God to man, precise and determinate: not an arbitrary collection of independent propositions, any of which may be accepted or rejected without injury to the others; but an har-

monious system of instruction, the articles of which are linked together by a natural connexion, and mutually related to each other. It is true indeed that the Scriptures do not present us with one brief and compendious summary of Christianity, like those creeds or bodies of belief, in which its principal articles were concentrated, probably at a very early period of the Christian era: but it is nevertheless true, that the terms, by which in Scripture it is described, are such as to bespeak its definitiveness and unity. Thus it is denominated “the gospel<sup>1</sup>,” “the word<sup>2</sup>,” “the truth<sup>3</sup>,” “the doctrine<sup>4</sup>,” “the faith<sup>5</sup>:” by these terms, absolutely: or by the same or kindred terms, with illustrative additions, “the gospel of God<sup>6</sup>,” “the gospel of the Son of God<sup>7</sup>,” “the gospel of Christ<sup>8</sup>,” “the gospel of the kingdom<sup>9</sup>,” “the word of God<sup>10</sup>,” “the word of truth<sup>11</sup>,” “the word of truth and gospel of our salvation<sup>12</sup>,” “the faithful word<sup>13</sup>,” “the words of

<sup>1</sup> Mark xvi. 15. Col. i. 23. 1 Thess. ii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. vi. 6. Eph. v. 26. 2 Tim. iv. 2. 1 Pet. ii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. iii. 1. 1 Pet. i. 22. 1 John ii. 21.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 16.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 13. 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Col. i. 23. 1 Pet. v. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. i. 1. <sup>7</sup> Rom. i. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Rom. i. 16. <sup>9</sup> Matt. xxiv. 14.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 36. 2 Cor. iv. 2. 1 Thess. ii. 13. Acts xix. 20.

<sup>11</sup> James i. 18. <sup>12</sup> Eph. i. 18. <sup>13</sup> Tit. i. 9.

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faith and of good doctrine<sup>1</sup>,” “the form of sound words<sup>2</sup>,” “wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness<sup>3</sup>;” “the truth of the gospel<sup>4</sup>,” “the truth as it is in Jesus<sup>5</sup>,” “the truth which is after godliness<sup>6</sup>;” “the doctrine of God<sup>7</sup>,” “the doctrine of God our Saviour<sup>8</sup>,” “the doctrine of Christ<sup>9</sup>,” “the Apostles' doctrine<sup>10</sup>,” “sound doctrine<sup>11</sup>;” “one faith<sup>12</sup>,” “the common faith<sup>13</sup>,” “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God<sup>14</sup>,” “the faith of God's elect<sup>15</sup>,” the “like precious faith<sup>16</sup>” with that of the Apostles, “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints<sup>17</sup>. ” Such are the terms, by which our blessed Lord and his Apostles have designated the Christian religion: terms, varying from each other as to the particular phrase, but all of them under that variety of phrase conveying the same ideas of precision and limitation, of union and integrity; and representing Christianity as a definite and harmonious code of religious instruction, composed indeed of several members, but com-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. i. 13.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. ii. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. iv. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Tit. i. 1.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Tit. ii. 10.

<sup>9</sup> Heb. vi. 1. 2 John 9, 10.

<sup>10</sup> Acts ii. 42.

<sup>11</sup> Tit. i. 9. 1 Tim. i. 10.

<sup>12</sup> Eph. iv. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Tit. i. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Eph. iv. 13.

<sup>15</sup> Tit. i. 1.

<sup>16</sup> 2 Pet. i. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Jude 3.

pacted by the combination of those members into one well-proportioned and perfect body.

II. Of Christianity, thus set forth to us in holy Scripture, we are called to the belief and the profession: not of any portion or portions of Christianity, but of the whole revelation in its integrity as well as in its purity. The prohibition, which drew a barrier round the volume of the law, defines no less our line of duty with reference to the gospel. As on the one hand we must "not add unto the word" of God, so on the other we must "not diminish from it<sup>1</sup>."

It was the commission of our Lord to his Apostles, that they should "go, make disciples," or Christians, "of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" and "teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever," added He, "I have commanded you<sup>2</sup>." Again, it was his commission to them, that they should "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" accompanied with the promise, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved<sup>3</sup>:" "believeth," that is unquestionably "the gospel," which they were commissioned to preach. And elsewhere a blessing was distinctly pronounced by Him upon all

<sup>1</sup> Deut. iv. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

<sup>3</sup> Mark xvi. 16.

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those, " who hear the word of God, and keep it<sup>1.</sup>" No latitude appears to be allowed by these declarations of our Lord, with respect to the limits of our belief: no dispensation for a partial faith: no allowance for accepting one part of the revelation, and rejecting others. " All things," whatsoever he had commanded his Apostles, and his Apostles in obedience to his command have taught, are to be " observed" by the converted nations: " the gospel," the entire gospel, is to be " believed" by every creature, to whom it is preached: " the word of God," whole as well as undefiled, without mutilation as well as without adulteration, is to be " kept" by all who hear it.

The language of the Apostles corresponds with that of their Divine Master, representing, under a variety of aspects, the same predominating sentiment of the importance and necessity of an adherence to the true Christian faith. " Brethren," saith St. Paul to the Corinthians, " I declare unto you the Gospel, which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain<sup>2.</sup>" " Watch ye;" this is his exhortation to the same Corinthians as a caution against false teachers, " stand fast in the faith<sup>3.</sup>" And again,

<sup>1</sup> Luke xi. 28.      <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2.      <sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

“examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith<sup>1.</sup>” “The unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God” is described by him to the Ephesians, as the mean of “coming unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ<sup>2.</sup>” The continued “fellowship” of the Philippians “in the Gospel<sup>3.</sup>” is hailed by him as a motive of joy and thanksgiving to God. The Colossians are encouraged by him to expect, that they shall be presented “holy and unblameable and unreprovable in the sight of God, if,” saith he, “ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven<sup>4.</sup>” And he accordingly exhorts the same Colossians, “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving<sup>5.</sup>” To the Thessalonians he asserts his own faithfulness in the matter of his teaching, “As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God which trieth our hearts<sup>6.</sup>;” and he expresses his gratitude for their devout reception of what he taught, “for this cause also thank we God without ceasing,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 5.<sup>4</sup> Col. i. 22, 23.<sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 13.<sup>5</sup> Col. ii. 6, 7.<sup>3</sup> Phil. i. 5.<sup>6</sup> 1. Thess. ii. 4.

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because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe<sup>1</sup>." Lastly, he admonishes the Hebrews to "hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering<sup>2</sup>;" and to "remember those who had the rule over them, who had spoken unto them the word of God, whose faith," saith he, "follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever<sup>3</sup>."

These are the instructions, which St. Paul inculcates, concerning an adherence to the Christian religion, upon the members of the Church in general. At the same time he inculcates instructions to the same effect upon the pastors of the Church. How does he describe "a good minister of Jesus Christ," but as one "nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto," he saith to Timothy, his own son in the faith, "thou hast attained<sup>4</sup>?" What does he enjoin upon the same Timothy as the means, by the continual observance of which he may both save himself and those that hear him? "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine<sup>5</sup>." What does he set before Timothy as "wholesome words," but "the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 13.      <sup>2</sup> Heb. x. 23.      <sup>3</sup> Heb. xiii. 7, 8.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 6.      <sup>5</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 16.

doctrine which is according to godliness<sup>1</sup>?" What does he admonish him to "hold fast," but "the form of sound words, which," saith he, "thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus<sup>2</sup>?" What does he enjoin him to "keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelled in them," but "that good thing," doubtless the Christian faith, "which was committed unto him<sup>3</sup>?" "In the things, which Timothy had learned and had been assured of," he was instructed to "continue, knowing of whom he had learned them<sup>4</sup>." "The things which Timothy had heard of Paul among many witnesses, the same" he was directed to "commit to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also<sup>5</sup>." To Titus, who as well as Timothy was our Apostle's "own son after the common faith<sup>6</sup>," St. Paul gave it in charge, that "a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers<sup>7</sup>." And Titus in his own particular ministry was enjoined, to shew "in doctrine uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned<sup>8</sup>." From all these exhortations and admonitions of St. Paul, whether addressed to

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 3.<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. i. 13.<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. i. 14.<sup>4</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 14.<sup>5</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 2.<sup>6</sup> Tit. i. 4.<sup>7</sup> Tit. i. 7, 9.<sup>8</sup> Tit. ii. 7, 8.

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Christian Churches in general, or to Christian ministers in particular, it will, I think, be abundantly plain, that it was the Apostle's purpose to inculcate upon all Christians the importance and necessity of maintaining an identity of faith, pure and perfect, as belonging to the Christian profession: that so the minister, after the example of the Apostle himself, might "take" his people "to record" that he was "pure from the blood of all men;" forasmuch as he "had not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God<sup>1</sup>"; and that the people, in accordance with the spirit of the Apostle's intreaties to the first Christians, and of his prayers to God in their behalf, might be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment;" that they might "all speak the same thing<sup>2</sup>"; and "with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ<sup>3</sup>."

Nor is the illustration and maintenance of our principle confined to the writings of this Apostle; but it extends itself over the instructions of the others, whose epistles have been transmitted for the edification of the Christian Church. By St. James the brethren are exhorted to "receive with meekness the ingrafted word," "the word of truth," as he had just before denominated it, "by which

<sup>1</sup> Acts xx. 26, 27.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. i. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xv. 6.

they were begotten to a new life," as being that "which is able to save their souls<sup>1</sup>." By St. Peter Christians are described as those, who have "obtained like precious faith with<sup>2</sup>" the Apostles, and who have "purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren<sup>3</sup>"; and they are encouraged by him to "resist the devil, stedfast in the faith<sup>4</sup>." It is pronounced by St. John, that "he who abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son<sup>5</sup>:" and by the same Apostle it is once and again set forth as the occasion of his greatest joy and exultation, that his "children," his "well-beloved," were "walking in the truth<sup>6</sup>." Lastly, St. Jude, addressing himself "to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called," and "giving all diligence to write unto them of the common salvation," deems it "needful for him to exhort them, that they should earnestly contend for the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints<sup>7</sup>." In all these passages of the apostolical writings, which might be increased to a considerable extent, as in the first place we perceive, agreeably to my former remark, a precise and determinate character attributed to Christianity, so we likewise perceive a

<sup>1</sup> James i. 18. 21.      <sup>2</sup> 2 Pet. i. 1.      <sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. i. 22.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Pet. v. 9.      <sup>5</sup> 2 John 9.

<sup>6</sup> 2 John 4.    3 John 1—4.      <sup>7</sup> Jude 1. 3.

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high value annexed to the belief and profession of it in its integrity and purity, without any symptom of indulgence allowed to a latitudinarian, a partial belief and profession of it. It is still "the Gospel," by the belief of which Christians are "saved;" "the faith," in which they are to "stand fast and to continue grounded and settled;" "the word of God," which "effectually worketh in them that believe;" "the doctrine," unto which the preacher is to "take heed;" "the form of sound words," which he is to "hold fast;" "the truth," in which Christians are to "walk;" "the doctrine of Christ," in which they are to "abide;" "the faith" of the first preachers of Christianity, which they are to "follow;" "the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints," for which they are "earnestly to contend." Surely any thing rather than indifference to the articles of belief, taught by Christ and his Apostles, and received by the primitive Church of Christ, is the reasonable inference from such declarations, exhortations, and injunctions; inforcing, as on the contrary they do inforce, the most steadfast belief, the most unwavering profession, the most pertinacious maintenance, and the most zealous defence, of the religion, which Christ and his Apostles taught.

III. But, further: not only is it to be observed that indifference to the articles of the Christian faith must not be understood to be permitted, for-

asmuch as the contrary conduct is inforced; but the non-acceptance of those articles, whole and undefiled, is expressly and unequivocally condemned. When our blessed Lord commanded his Apostles to "preach the Gospel," and accompanied his command with the promise, "he who believeth and is baptized shall be saved," He failed not at the same time to deliver the solemn denunciation, "He that believeth not shall be damned<sup>1.</sup>" The Gospel, comprehending, as the phrase imports, and as the corresponding passage in St. Matthew confirms its import, "all things, whatsoever"<sup>2</sup> the Apostles were to teach in obedience to this command, and by virtue of this authority, of their Lord, is thus proposed for the object of faith to every human creature. And as belief in the Gospel, in this its comprehensive sense, is thus pronounced to be the condition of acceptance with God, so the disbelief of it is pronounced to be the occasion of the rejection of those who receive it not. Thus again, by the same supreme authority we are told, with reference to the religion which He revealed, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day<sup>3.</sup>" And again, extending as in the former

<sup>1</sup> Mark xvi. 16.    <sup>2</sup> Matt. xxviii. 20.    <sup>3</sup> John xii. 48.

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case the sentence to the doctrine of his inspired ministers, as well as to that delivered by his own mouth, "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he, that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me<sup>1</sup>." If on these declarations, and such as these, be established the obligation upon those, to whom the Gospel is preached, of believing the Gospel in general; (and who will dare to gainsay or question the obligation?) upon the same declarations rests the obligation of believing all the parts of the Gospel in particular. No limitation can be proposed to separate between that which must be believed, and that which may be rejected. All the parts are bound upon our faith by the same authority. The argument of St. James with respect to the moral precepts of religion, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all<sup>2</sup>," is equally applicable to its doctrinal truths: all proceed from the same unerring source, and all therefore are intitled to the same unreserved acceptance.

Such is the sentence of our Lord Himself. Faithful to their Divine Master, zealous for the truth of his Gospel, and solicitous at the same time for the salvation of those to whom they were commissioned to preach it, the Apostles failed

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 16.

<sup>2</sup> James ii. 10.

not to impress upon the minds of their disciples, together with the benefits which would follow a steadfast and consistent belief of it, the evils which would result from rejecting it, either altogether or in part.

Accordingly, St. Paul divides the hearers of the Gospel into the two classes, of "them that are saved, and them that perish:" and whilst he speaks of it as "the savour of life unto life" to the one description, he no less distinctly denominates it as being to the other "the savour of death unto death<sup>1</sup>." Of those, whose teaching should be a perversion of the Gospel of Christ, he pronounces to the Galatians, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."<sup>2</sup> The Corinthians he admonishes of their danger from such teachers, as should deviate from the Christian truth: "I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."<sup>3</sup> Having instructed the Ephesians in the benefits of persevering "in the unity of the faith, and of the know-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. i. 8, 9.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 3.

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ledge of the Son of God," he cautions them that they be not "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."<sup>1</sup> Upon the Colossians he impresses a similar caution, "Beware lest any man spoil you, through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world; and not after Christ."<sup>2</sup> And in his epistle to Timothy he denounces the blasphemy of some, who "concerning faith had made shipwreck<sup>3</sup>;" not by apostatising from Christianity altogether, but, as the context informs us, by maintaining doctrines which overthrew the true Christian faith. Upon Timothy himself, in the execution of his ministerial duty, the same Apostle lays a charge, to "keep that which was committed to his trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith."<sup>4</sup> To Timothy again he gives an alarming description of the corrupters of the truth, accompanied with a salutary admonition concerning his own conduct towards them, "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 13, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Col. ii. 8.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. i. 19, 20.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 20, 21.

which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself<sup>1</sup>." And to Titus, in the execution of his episcopal office, he gives this direction, "A man that is an heretick, after the first and second admonition, reject, knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself<sup>2</sup>."

To these testimonies of St. Paul concerning the insufficiency and the peril of an erroneous or defective faith, let me add others of similar import from his brethren in the apostleship. Let me refer you to the manner in which St. Peter cautions those, who had "obtained like precious faith with" himself, against "false teachers, who should privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction<sup>3</sup>." Let me notice the "condemnation," which St. Jude describes as ordained for those "ungodly men," who had "crept in unawares" into the Christian Church, "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and de-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 3—5.

<sup>2</sup> Tit. iii. 10, 11.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 1.

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nying the only Lord God; and our Lord Jesus Christ<sup>1</sup>." Finally, let me remind you, how St. John exhorts his beloved, to "believe not every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they be of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world<sup>2</sup>;" how he speaks of those teachers, who "were not of us," as he expresses it, that is, who did not agree with the Apostles and true Church of Christ in the doctrine of the Gospel, as "antichrists<sup>3</sup>;" or opponents of the Saviour; how he denounces every departure from sound Christian doctrine, every "lie," as he emphatically designates it, as "not of the truth<sup>4</sup>;" and with what severity of animadversion he reprobates a dereliction of the Christian truth in the teachers and professors of Christianity; "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed: for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds<sup>5</sup>."

It is in language such as this that we find the Apostles guarding the first Christians against the preaching or the adoption of tenets, propounded

<sup>1</sup> Jude 4.      <sup>2</sup> 1 John iv. 1.      <sup>3</sup> 1 John ii. 18, 19.

<sup>4</sup> 1 John ii. 21.

<sup>5</sup> 2 John 8—11.

under colour of a profession of the Gospel, but in reality not agreeable to the true doctrine which the Gospel contains. Some of these cautions, no doubt, had a special reference to particular deviations from the truth, at that time prevailing in the Church. There is too abundant reason to fear, my brethren, that some of the very worst of those deviations distinguish the latitudinarian professors of Christianity in these our days. Such cautions might accordingly be applied to ourselves likewise, with the strictest and most literal propriety. At the same time they all concur in testifying generally the solicitude of the Apostles for maintaining the Christian faith in its original purity and integrity; for securing their disciples against an erroneous or defective profession of Christianity; and for thereby protecting them from the evil consequences of a departure from the true faith of Christ.

Thus have we considered, as was proposed, the character under which Christianity, as a system of belief, is set forth by our blessed Lord and his Apostles; the manner, in which they enforce a belief and profession of it; and the consequences which they ascribe to a contrary conduct. According to these their views, Christianity is not a latitudinarian religion, proposing a variety of independent doctrines, and leaving to the choice of its

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professors which they will embrace and which they will reject: but it is a religion precise and definite; it proposes a system of truths, mutually connected with and dependent on each other; it represents those truths as the fit objects of a Christian's faith; and to a sincere and conscientious belief and profession of them it promises happiness, on a wilful disbelief and rejection of them it denounces woe.

Upon these views, which pervade the discourses and writings of our blessed Lord and his Apostles, our scriptural Church, that sound member of the "one holy catholick and apostolick Church" of Christ, regulates her conduct. She affects not to suppose, that a profession of Christian faith in general terms supersedes the necessity of a profession of faith in those particular articles, which in her judgment constitute Christianity: she affects not to suppose that such a general and indefinite profession will, according to the terms of the Gospel covenant, entitle him who makes it to the promises of the gospel, or qualify him to escape its threatenings. She supposes, on the contrary, that belief in Christianity must comprise belief in those doctrines, which constitute Christianity: and she supposes that such a definite belief is generally necessary to salvation, and that the want of such belief is generally in danger of condemnation.

This is the judgment of the Church, established, as she thinks, upon “most certain warrants of holy Scripture<sup>1.</sup>” And her judgment being thus, as she thinks, established, she does not consider herself at liberty to withhold it from her members; she does not consider herself at liberty to leave them in darkness or in doubt, with respect to a subject of all things the most important to their spiritual and eternal welfare: but she deems it to be her bounden and indispensable duty to make open declaration of her judgment, not from any feeling of asperity or as a measure of hostility, God forbid! towards those who differ from her; but as a measure of security to her own children, and of “conversion” and recovery from error, if such be God’s will, of those who have “erred from the truth<sup>2.</sup>” More than this, it were inconsistent with the spirit of that Christian charity and moderation, by which the Church is signally distinguished, if she were to attempt to do. To do less than this would be consistent, neither with her Christian charity, that charity, which “rejoiceth in the truth;” nor with her regard for the revealed will and glory of God in Christ Jesus her Lord.

There was a time, we know, when our national Church was depressed by a weight of unscriptural

<sup>1</sup> Art. viii.

<sup>2</sup> James v. 19, 20.

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doctrine, which encumbered her profession of the Christian faith. From that encumbrance she was enabled to deliver herself, by the blessing of God upon the piety, the learning, and the constancy, "the resistance even unto blood<sup>1</sup>," of her noble band of martyrs, her fathers in the protestant faith. But whilst she thus strove to deliver herself from the encumbrance of corrupt doctrines, she was no less anxious to preserve and maintain of her former profession whatever was sound and uncorrupt; to "turn neither to the right hand nor to the left<sup>2</sup>" of the rule prescribed by the word of God; to cut off indeed every addition which had been made to the truth of the Gospel, but constantly to resist withal every diminution of it. Thus she carefully drew forth the true doctrines of the Gospel from their sole depository, the holy Scriptures: she adopted and made her own the ancient creeds, by which they had been acknowledged: she embodied them in her forms of worship; she defined them in her Articles of Religion; and so she stood forth in the eyes of Christendom, as, blessed be God! she still continues to stand forth, and God grant she may never cease to do so! a reformed, a pure, a scriptural Church, worthy of being honoured in her national capacity as "the Church of the living God, the pillar and

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. v. 32.

ground of the truth !” She well knows that “other foundation” of religious teaching “can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ;” and, “as a wise master-builder,” she specially “taketh heed how she buildeth thereupon.” But the foundation being laid, and the building being erected, she scruples not to assert its value and its importance. She scruples not to avow her conviction, that “whosoever will be saved, above all things it is necessary that he hold, whole and undefiled, the Catholick faith.” In this catholick faith accordingly ; catholick, in its proper and legitimate, not in a factitious and assumed sense ; catholick, as denoting the *universal* faith of the primitive Church of Christ, not the peculiar tenets of a large but corrupted part of it ; she endeavours by her catechetical provisions to bring up her youthful members, and by all the provisions of her liturgy to confirm in the same faith both them and those of riper age.

I do not think it necessary to specify any of the doctrines, which the Church professes ; because it has been rather my purpose to defend the general principle on which she acts, namely, the principle of the necessity of faith in the Gospel, altogether and in all its parts ; and to expose the unscriptural character of indifference to belief

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in specifick articles of faith, commonly described, if I mistake not, in the present day, but, I apprehend, most incorrectly and injuriously described, by the name of *liberality*. This liberality, “falsely so called,” this indifference to specifick doctrines, will, I trust, have appeared to find no countenance in the language or practice of our Lord and his Apostles; whilst the principle, which regulates the Church, will, I trust, have appeared to be strictly conformable to the examples, which in all respects she professes to follow. The truth of any particular doctrine espoused by her, as part of the true Christian faith, must of course be derived from the same authority, to which the general principle, now insisted on, has been referred; namely, that of the warranty of holy Scripture. To this touch-stone of sound doctrine she ever most unreservedly refers. Scriptural throughout, she submits herself in all things to the revealed will of her Divine Founder; and seeks no other guide for her faith than the pure written word of the Christian verity, the genuine “Oracles of God.”

It is for her explicit avowal, and her steadfast maintenance of this principle, that the national Church of England and Ireland claims and deserves the dutiful obedience and the affectionate attachment of the people. But whilst we thus defend the character and vindicate the judgment of the Church, let us not fail to bear in mind that

the subject, which has now been under discussion, is one of vital importance also to every individual who hears me, to every creature to whom the Gospel of Christ is preached. Whatever may be the fond conceits of a morbid liberality, if we will be content to be regulated in our judgment by the declarations of our Lord Himself and his Apostles, we must be persuaded that Christian faith is necessary to Christian salvation; that the object of a Christian faith is the word of God as made known to us by our Saviour; and that, as that word containeth all things necessary to be believed in order to our salvation, so we cannot, as we hope for salvation, wilfully refuse to believe any thing which that word containeth: in short we must be convinced, to state the case in the compendious and authoritative sentence of our blessed Saviour Himself, that, wherever the Gospel is preached by those whom He has commissioned to preach it, “he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

May it please Almighty God by his Holy Spirit to impress this awful sentence deeply and permanently upon the minds of all of you, my beloved brethren! May He cause his gospel to be preached faithfully amongst you! May He guard you from the delusions of those who would seduce you to make shipwreck of the faith! May He guide you

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to the belief and profession of all the truth, which He has revealed by his blessed Son ! May He by Christian faith confirm you and strengthen you in Christian holiness ! And finally, may He through the same faith establish you in everlasting happiness, for the merits and by the mediation of that Son, our Lord Jesus Christ !

Now unto God the Father, who hath made us and all the world ; unto God the Son, who hath redeemed us and all mankind ; and unto God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth us and all the elect people of God ; the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three Persons and one God ; be all honour and glory, in all churches of the saints, world without end. Amen.

We yield Thee humble thanks, O heavenly Father, that thou hast vouchsafed to call us to the knowledge of thy grace and faith in Thee : increase this knowledge, and confirm this faith in us evermore. Give thy Holy Spirit to all those who are baptized in thy name : that being then born again, and made heirs of everlasting salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ, they may continue thy servants, and attain thy promises ; through the same Lord Jesus Christ thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, everlastingly. Amen<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Ministration of Baptism.

## DISCOURSE VI.

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### THE CHURCH'S NOTION OF THE TRUTH AGREEABLE TO THAT OF ST. JOHN.

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#### 3 JOHN, ver. 1—4.

The elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

THERE is something to my mind extremely pleasing and affecting, in this expression of good will from the writer of the epistle towards the person to whom the epistle is addressed; as well as in the general sentiment to which the particular observation gives occasion.

Who the person was, to whom the epistle is addressed, we have, I apprehend, no means of knowing. He is termed in the salutation, con-

tained in the first verse, “the well-beloved Gaius,” whom, adds the writer, “I love in the truth.” And in the progress of the epistle he appears to have been honourably distinguished, for his attachment to the Christian faith, and for his corresponding exercise of the Christian virtues of charity and hospitality. But more than this, neither the sacred volume, nor the other records of primitive Christianity, give us any information concerning him.

Of the person, by whom the epistle was written, we have large information. He is denominated by himself, in this and in the preceding epistle, “the elder,” a title of dignity in the patriarchal times, thence transmitted to the Jewish, and thence again to the primitive Christian Church; and well adapted to the high apostolical office which he bore, not perhaps without allusion to his advanced age when he wrote: but to us he is more familiarly known by his name and function, as St. John the Apostle and Evangelist, or by his character as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

To “the well-beloved Gaius” then, “whom he loved in the truth,” did the Apostle and Evangelist St. John, the “disciple, whom Jesus loved,” address himself in the words of the text. And in them he breathes forth an earnest wish or prayer for the temporal prosperity and health of Gaius, answer-

able to his spiritual} prosperity: he expresses the great joy which he had experienced on learning from the testimony of his brother Christians that such was the prosperity of Gaius, signified by the assurance of "the truth being in him," and of his "walking in the truth:" and he thereupon lays down a general position, with respect to those who had imbibed from him instruction in religious knowledge, and agreeable to the sentiment which he had expressed concerning the case of Gaius in particular, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." It is upon the subject of the Apostle's joy, as intimated in this passage, that I propose at present to address you: and in so doing I shall take occasion to bring under your especial notice an article of the Catholic faith, which, in obedience to God's holy word, the Church holds fast as an essential part of the Christian verity, and a "right belief" of which she, in obedience to the same word, pronounces to be "necessary to everlasting salvation."

I. "I rejoiced greatly," says the Apostle, "when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." Now of the exceeding great joy here professed by St. John the foundation manifestly is his assurance, that the persons, in whose

behalf he experienced it, were “walking in the truth.” What then is “the truth” intended by him, becomes a leading object for inquiry. And in answer it may suffice to state first of all in general terms, that “the truth” in the New Testament is emphatically used to signify the Gospel, or the Christian faith, or that revelation of God’s will to man, unto which the Son of God was born and came into the world that He might bear witness; and which St. Paul denominates in language corresponding with this of St. John, absolutely “the truth,” or with a specifick adjunct “the truth of the Gospel,” or “the truth as it is in Jesus.”

But wherefore should our Apostle express such lively joy on hearing that his children, those whom he had previously nurtured in religious knowledge, and for whom he still felt the tender affection of a father, “walked in this truth?” Plainly for a reason, to which his own optative or precatory language in the foregoing verse directs us, because he was thereby assured of their spiritual welfare. “Beloved,” saith he to Gaius, “I wish or pray above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.” But what evidence had he of the prosperity of his beloved Gaius’s soul? “For,” he subjoins, and this is the evidence of such prosperity, “I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth

that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth." The walking in the truth then, or a steadfast and consistent adherence to the Gospel or the Christian faith, was the evidence of that spiritual welfare, of that prosperity of soul in his disciples, which excited such lively emotions of joy in the Apostle, and gave occasion to his language of cordial delight and felicitation. To the same effect we find him addressing himself to "the elect," or Christian, "lady," in his second epistle, "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father." And for the same cause, and with the same spirit, do we find St. Paul exulting over his converts, and giving thanks for them to God, as "his hope and joy and crown of rejoicing;" as "his joy and crown;" as "his glory and joy<sup>1</sup>."

For a proper understanding of this matter we must have recourse to the authoritative declaration of our blessed Lord Himself, when He gave commission to his Apostles that they should become his ministers in preaching to mankind the truth, which He came from his Father to reveal. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20. Phil. iv. 1.

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shall be damned'." The commission, you see, which imposed upon the ministers of the Lord the obligation of preaching the Gospel, did not leave the hearers in a state of indifference with respect to the effect of their preaching. Upon the manner, in which the hearers should receive it, was to depend their final doom of salvation or condemnation. To them who should embrace the Gospel thus delivered to them by the ministers of Christ, and submit to his discipline, and obey his laws, the Gospel was to become, as St. Paul expresses it, "the savour of life unto life:" but to them, who should refuse to embrace it, it was to become "the savour of death unto death<sup>2</sup>." Or, as St. John explicitly announces the sentence in the words of St. John the Baptist, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him<sup>3</sup>:" and elsewhere as the same St. John announces the sentence in his own words, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that

<sup>1</sup> Mark xvi. 16.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> John iii. 36.

hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life<sup>1</sup>."

Hence the motive to the joy expressed by the Apostle is obvious and unequivocal. He "rejoiced greatly that his well-beloved Gaius walked in the truth;" he had "no greater joy than to hear that his children walked in truth;" because to his mind it was a satisfactory proof of their spiritual welfare, of their souls' health and prosperity; because it was to his mind a satisfactory proof, that provided they should continue to walk steadfastly and consistently in the same course, they should not perish, but should have everlasting life.

II. I remarked just now, that it was a leading object of our inquiry to ascertain what was "the truth" intended by the Apostle in my text. And I also remarked, that it might suffice to state first of all in general terms, that "the truth" in the New Testament is emphatically used to signify the Gospel or the Christian faith. In order, however, to arrive at St. John's full meaning, it is requisite that we should now be more definite; lest a laxity of language and ideas should leave us in a state of dangerous misconception upon a point of no trivial moment to our spiritual welfare.

<sup>1</sup> 1 John v. 10—12.

Now the time and circumstances of St. John's writing are much to be considered by us, and to be had carefully in our remembrance. It is the constant tradition of the Church, and matter of universal agreement amongst Christians, that he wrote after the other writers of the New Testament. All the other books contained in the canon of the Christian Scriptures were probably composed before the sixty-sixth year of the Christian æra, or within thirty-three or thirty-four years of our Saviour's death. The date most commonly and most reasonably assigned to St. John's writings (I speak both of his Gospel and of his Epistles, and the remark might be extended to his Revelation likewise), the most probable, I say, and generally approved date, assigned to St. John's writings, places them within three or four years of the close of the first century of the Christian æra, or at the distance of about thirty years from the latest of the previous writings. In that interval corrupt opinions had already begun to grow up in the Church of Christ, and to adulterate the purity of the Christian profession. Of such opinions there were not any more important than those, perhaps there were not any equally important as those, which related to the person and the sufferings of the Author of our faith. On this subject the turbid stream of heresy took two different courses, diverging in separate directions from the pure cur-

rent of apostolical truth. The Cerinthians, who derived their name from Cerinthus, the founder of their sect, denied the Godhead of the Saviour of the world; the Docetæ, whose denomination indicated their visionary notions concerning Him, denied his manhood: the former affirmed that Jesus was not truly the Son of God, begotten before all worlds; the latter affirmed that He was not truly born in the world, but that the body of Jesus, and every thing that He appeared to do and suffer in it, was mere illusion: the former, by derogating from the dignity of the Redeemer's nature, proportionably abated the value of his sufferings; the latter, by substituting an imaginary apparition in the room of an actually crucified Redeemer, annulled the notion of his sufferings altogether.

Against these corruptions, pernicious as they were, and destructive of the truth of the Gospel, the beloved disciple stood forth to vindicate the true character of his Master and Redeemer, of his Lord and his God. Observe the language wherein “he describeth the person of Christ,” according to the summary of the chapter in our translation, at the commencement of his first epistle. “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested,

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and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." And observe, in the course of the same epistle, especially throughout the fourth and fifth chapters, how distinctly and eloquently he asserts the doctrine of "Jesus Christ being come in the flesh;" that doctrine which is familiarly known in theological language by the term of the Incarnation of our Lord: and how plainly in the assertion of it he comprises the assertions of the eternal existence and true deity of the Son of God, of his assumption of a human body and a human soul in the person of Jesus, and of his making propitiation for the sins of the whole world, of the whole human race, by the merit, death, and sufferings of the man thus united to the Godhead.

Observe, again, the language with which he announces his gospel, setting forth, as the subject is described in the summary prefixed to our version of the first chapter, "the divinity, humanity, and office of Jesus Christ." "In the beginning was the Word:"—your recollection, I am sure, will have anticipated me in the entire passage: but indeed it is so important, and so impressive,

so pregnant with conviction to the candid enquirer, and so full of satisfaction and delight to the humble and true Christian, that I cannot refrain from proceeding with it, and you will not, I am persuaded, begrudge me your time and attention whilst I recite it at length. “ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him ; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life ; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness ; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name : which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the

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Father,) full of grace and truth." I shall make no further comment upon the meaning of this passage, than simply by asserting, that he who shall deny, that the expressions, in their plain and obvious and unsophisticated signification convey, or that they were intended to convey, the notion of the eternal and essential deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, incarnate for man's salvation, may, if he choose, deny that there is a sun in the heavens, and that the earth is enlightened by his rays. But I will offer to your minds a suggestion, relative to the particular circumstances under which St. John wrote the passage, and agreeable to the previous course of my observations; and I will offer it in the language of a late learned and distinguished divine.

"Against the heresy of Cerinthus," says my author; "against the heresy of Cerinthus, who considered our Saviour to be no more than a real man, the Son of Joseph and Mary, and produced in the common mode of generation, did the aged and venerable St. John peculiarly write his gospel. 'St. John, the disciple of our Lord,' as Irenæus tells us, 'was willing, by the publication of his Gospel, to take away the error which Cerinthus had disseminated amongst men.' We accordingly see one feature in the complexion of infant Christianity, one circumstance in the history of our rising religion, which has been little noticed, but

is very striking in itself, and results entirely from this. The Divine Founder of our faith, and the dignified preachers of it to the world, as late as St. John himself, do never propose the doctrine of Christ's divinity as a *new article of belief*; as one that had been hitherto unknown to the Church of God, and that was now brought to light by the Gospel. They do not lay it before their hearers or their readers in formal propositions; they bring it not forward to their understandings with a solemnity of introduction, which should shew their own sense of its surprising nature, and prepare the minds of their people for the first reception of it. On the contrary, they pass imperceptibly into the subject: they insinuate rather than proclaim it. They speak of it in such a manner, as proves it to have been familiar to their own minds, and to the minds of their countrymen. Whenever they notice it, they notice it as a doctrine, which had been always professed by the Church of God, had been always believed by its members, and now wanted only to be applied to the person of Jesus. This remark," proceeds the learned divine, whose suggestion I am recommending to your minds, "This remark, which is so necessary to the right understanding of the Scriptures, is additionally demonstrated to be true, by the evident contrast which appears in the writings of St. John, compared with all the other writings

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of the New Testament, concerning this doctrine. In his time the doctrine having been doubted, denied, and opposed by Cerinthus and Ebion, this last of the Apostles, whose life seems to have been continued for the very purpose, set himself to mention the doctrine in a very different manner. He no longer notes it in the easy and transient mode of his predecessors; but asserts it in peremptory terms, and dwells upon it in circumstantial language; and this, too, at the very commencement of his Gospel; in order to impress the doctrine upon the minds and spirits of his readers for ever."

Such being the time and circumstances in which St. John wrote, and such the consequent design and purport of his writings, we arrive at a more definite idea of the doctrine, which doubtless he had in his contemplation, when he expressed himself as rejoicing greatly in the prosperity of the soul of the well-beloved Gaius, on hearing that he "walked in the truth;" and declared that he had "no greater joy than to hear that his children walked in truth." In the first instance, we supposed "the truth" to indicate, as unquestionably it does, the Gospel or the Christian faith. We now perceive it to indicate, as one prominent and indefeasible article of the Gospel or Christian faith, specially the doctrine of the incarnation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; comprising

his eternal existence and essential Godhead, his assumption to Himself of the human nature, and his suffering in that nature for the sins of men.

An obvious consequence from the foregoing exposition is the remark, that, as the assurance of the well-beloved Gaius “walking in the truth” was a ground of joy and exultation to St. John, so the contrary assurance would have excited in him very different feelings, and drawn from him very different language. Put the case, that Gaius had renounced his belief in the truth, in the doctrines of the Gospel; specially in that great doctrine of the Gospel, which we have seen the Apostle so earnestly inculcate in his other writings, and the inculcating of which has appeared to be the very scope and end of his labours. Is it reasonable to suppose that he could have received the intelligence with satisfaction and approbation; that he could have heard it with other feelings than those of the most pungent sorrow, or have noticed it with other language than that of the most unqualified regret?

But, indeed, we are not left to our own supposition for the solution of such a case. For in his second epistle, having saluted the person, to whom it is addressed, in terms of congratulation similar to those which we have been considering, and on a similar occasion, he thus proceeds: “This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the

beginning, ye should walk in it. For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." And in his First Epistle he thus discriminates between the confession and the denial of the doctrine of the Saviour's incarnation, "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

Thus does the beloved disciple declare his sentiments with respect to those who walked not, as well as with respect to those who did walk, in the truth; denouncing as destitute of the Spirit of God, and as opponents to the Son of God, those who should disavow the character under which

that Son is revealed to mankind. Nor is the admonition of the disciple destitute of full support and justification in the sentence of the Son of God Himself, whose promise of salvation to those, who should receive his testimony and believe his Gospel, is accompanied with the doom of condemnation to those who should believe it not. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be damned<sup>1</sup>. ” “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day<sup>2</sup>. ”

Such being the declarations of the word of God in holy Scripture, we perceive the grounds of that article of the Catholick faith, to which I alluded in the opening of this Discourse, which the Church holds fast as an essential part of the Christian verity, and a “right belief” of which she pronounces to be “necessary to everlasting salvation.” “It is necessary,” she affirms, “to everlasting salvation, that he that will be saved,” that is, who is willing or desires to be saved, “believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right faith is, that we believe and confess, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man.” The subject has now been regarded

<sup>1</sup> Mark xvi. 16.

<sup>2</sup> John xii. 48.

under one particular aspect, as suggested by the congratulatory address of the Apostle St. John to his well-beloved Gaius: and I trust that both the truth of the article, and the necessity of believing it, will have appeared to be no less distinctly stated in the Apostle's admonitions than in the confession of the Church.

Having thus discussed the proposed argument in a manner, I would hope, plain to your understandings, and satisfactory to your judgments, I will now, my brethren, make an application as briefly as may be of the foregoing doctrine.

Of "all the counsel of God," which it is the duty of the Christian minister to "declare" to those committed to his charge, it is in my mind the most marvellous, but withal the most characteristick and indefeasible article, that "the Word or Son of God, which was in the beginning, and which was with God, and which was God; which was in the beginning with God; by whom all things were made, and without whom there was not any thing made that was made;" to me, I say, it appears the most marvellous, but, at the same time, the most distinguishing and essential part of the Divine counsel, that this Son of God, this Word of life, this only-begotten and co-eternal Son of the eternal Father, should have been "made flesh, and have dwelt among us;" that He

should have been “heard by our ears, and seen and looked upon by our eyes, and handled by our hands,” and finally have become “obedient unto death” for us men and for our salvation. Persuaded then of the infallible truth of this necessary article of our Lord’s Incarnation, as specially set forth by the holy Apostle, the beloved disciple, whom I have taken for the interpreter of his own language in the text; knowing, as I cannot but well know, the distinct and unambiguous avowals of the Church, of which you are members, concerning this essential doctrine of the Gospel of God; confiding, as I hope I may with safety confide, in the soundness of the faith, and the corresponding uncorruptness of the doctrine, of those ministers of the Church, who have more immediately the spiritual “rule over you, and who watch for your souls as they that must give account;” and trusting, as on such grounds I think I may reasonably and assuredly trust, that you hold that “Catholick Faith,” which holy Scripture, and the Church in obedience to holy Scripture, pronounces necessary to everlasting salvation: it is matter of sincere and heartfelt gratification to me that I am enabled to address you collectively, my brethren, in the language of good will and congratulation addressed by the Apostle to his “well-beloved Gaius;” to put up an earnest “wish and prayer for your health and prosperity, even as,” I trust,

"your souls prosper ;" and to "rejoice greatly with you that are walking in the truth."

But if any one should accidentally be present ; for in this our day of latitudinarian profession, when the Cerinthian heresy, however denominated, is rife and on the alert to disseminate its virulence among us, the supposition is not altogether improbable ; if, I say, my beloved brethren, any one should now happen to be present, whose faith is not conformable to "the truth" which we have considered to have been the foundation of the Apostle's joy ; let me intreat him by the regard which he entertains for his soul's health and prosperity, in the spirit of meekness and Christian charity let me intreat him, to examine carefully and impartially the grounds of that belief, which the word of God, as we understand it, and which the Church, in correspondence with the word of God, unequivocally pronounces to be "necessary to everlasting salvation."

I cannot by any possibility be ignorant, that it is apt to be considered and vaunted of as a mark of an enlarged and liberal mind, of a mind exempt from vulgar prejudices, and endowed with a noble and generous spirit, to manifest indifference to peculiar modes of religious faith. Such we have seen was not the judgment of the disciple whom Jesus loved. Indeed, wherein consists the true liberality or the right reason, of setting ourselves

up above the wisdom of God, and of slighting the revelation which He hath been pleased to give for the salvation of his creatures, it were difficult indeed to show. On the contrary, if God has really revealed certain truths for our instruction, as from the volume of his holy word we are convinced He has; and if He has pronounced an adherence to such truths to be necessary to our salvation; it must be one of the best exercises of our understanding, and one of the best proofs of a true liberality, not to permit indifference to prevail upon such essential points, without raising our voice against it: but to strive by all legitimate means, and at all seasonable opportunities, to awaken the minds of all men to the importance of “walking in the truth.”

Let it not be supposed then, that, in insisting upon the foregoing topick, I have been actuated by an irrational and illiberal spirit, in no man more unbecoming than in a minister of the Gospel. Rather give me credit for conscientiously believing, after due inquiry, that which it has been the object of my Discourse to inculcate; and for consistently endeavouring in the spirit of that Christian charity, which “rejoiceth in the truth,” to confirm or to implant in others the like belief, that we may have mutual joy in the persuasion that we are all “walking in the truth.”

My sense of the infinite importance of that be-

lief will have appeared from my previous remarks. Indeed, I scruple not to avow my conviction, that “the mystery of our Lord’s holy Incarnation” is that great doctrine of the Christian truth, which gives consistency to the Gospel as a system of faith, and life to it as a code of morals. The belief in this doctrine is the corner-stone of my own Christian hope and confidence in God’s mercy: and it accordingly is that which I would most earnestly and assiduously impress upon the minds of others. Nor could I experience a more heartfelt or greater joy than in supposing, that, persuaded as I am of the truth and the importance of this doctrine, I might be the instrument of the grace of God in causing any of you, my beloved brethren, to “walk in the truth;” by implanting or strengthening in your minds an adequate sense of the dignity and merits of the Son of God, our Lord and Saviour; who, as his beloved disciple described Him, “is the true God and eternal life,” even Jesus Christ, who is, in the language of another Apostle, “God manifest in the flesh,” “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

To his protection, in his exercise of the sovereignty over the Church which He has purchased by his blood, I now commit you, my well-beloved brethren. May He, who sitteth at the right hand of his Father, the only Mediator between God and men, be continually your Advocate with the

Father, and the effectual Propitiation for your sins! May He, who is the Author and Finisher of our faith, thence send forth his Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, to dwell perpetually in your hearts, and to teach and guide you into all truth! May He train up your children in the knowledge and practice of his holy religion: may He by the same holy religion confirm and establish your manhood, and solace and support your declining years! Finally, when He shall come in the last day in his glory, and all the holy angels with Him, and shall sit, the Judge of all mankind, on the throne of his glory, may He then raise you up, and take you to Himself, and receive you to the mansions of the Father; where ye may join with the angels of God, and the spirits of just men made perfect, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Amen.

Now unto Him, therefore, the Word which was in the beginning, and which was with God, and which was God; unto Him with the Father Almighty, and the Eternal Spirit, three Persons in the unity of the Divine nature, be ascribed, as is most due, blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, now, henceforth, and for ever. Amen.

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Merciful Lord, we beseech Thee to cast thy bright beams of light upon thy Church, that it being enlightened by the doctrine of thy blessed Apostle and Evangelist St. John, may so walk in the light of thy truth, that it may at length attain to the light of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Collect for St. John the Evangelist's day.

## DISCOURSE VII.

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### THE MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH, THEIR DIVINE COMMISSION.

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JOHN xx. 21.

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you : as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

WHEN our incarnate Redeemer, who had been sent forth from the Father to institute a Church for man's salvation, was about to return to the Father, He chose an order of men, to whom He gave commission to preach his Gospel, to baptize all nations, to administer his blessed body and blood, to remit sins, to absolve and reconcile sinners, and generally to settle, propagate, and confirm the Church which He had instituted. Moreover he gave them power of transmitting to others, whom they should choose for the purpose, the office which He had intrusted to them ; adding withal a promise of his continual and perpetual presence with them, and those whom they should

appoint to succeed them. Such is the origin of the ministerial commission, as deduced from my text; illustrated by those injunctions and encouragements which our Lord gave to his Apostles before his ascension. In consequence of this commission, the Church of Christ has been hitherto maintained for man's salvation by the agency of his authorized ministers; and so no doubt it will continue to be maintained by the same agency, "alway, even unto the end of the world."

The authority of the Christian minister, that authority by which he preaches the word of God, and administers the sacraments, and performs the other functions of his sacred office in the congregation committed to his charge, is, perhaps, not so often made the subject of a discourse from the pulpit, as occasion may seem to require. We are fearful, probably, of appearing to "magnify our office<sup>1</sup>," by setting forth its claims to your respect: and we may probably regard the advancing of our pretensions as likely to be received by you with indifference, or it may be with some feeling of dissatisfaction and distaste. Yet it is right that the members of the Church in general should be carefully instructed, and correctly informed, on the subject of the ministerial commission, even as an

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xi. 13.

affair of infinite concern to themselves: in order that being convinced of the real nature of their ministers' authority, they may, together with such respect for an office of God's institution as the word of God requires, combine a reasonable, a conscientious, a faithful, and a persevering attendance on their own pastors' ministrations, and a corresponding attachment to the Church, forbearing every degree of countenance from all irregular pretensions; and may join in giving thanks and glory to that gracious Being, who, in establishing his Church to be the ark of man's salvation, provided also for its exigencies a succession of men, by whom the means of grace and salvation should be perpetually ministered to his glory and his people's good.

The authority, then, of the ministers of the Church, whence it is derived, and how it is conferred, with some cautionary remarks on the undue assumption and collation of the ministerial character, will, with the Divine blessing, be submitted to your consideration as the subject of the following Discourse.

I. And here it is first to be observed, that the ministerial commission is essentially of *Divine origin*, so that the claim to it cannot be held valid, nor the possession of it be admitted to exist, unless it can be referred, immediately or

ultimately, to the will of the Divine Founder of the Church.

For the bearer of the commission is to be “accounted of,” in the Apostle’s language, “as the minister of Christ; the steward of the mysteries of God<sup>1</sup>;” “an ambassador for Christ<sup>2</sup>,” as though by him God did speak to his people; as speaking to the people in Christ’s stead. But such qualities, bearing as they do reference to a superior, necessarily infer the approbation of the superior, as a condition for giving validity and efficacy to the acts of him who appears in such a relation: for what reliance can be placed on the act of a supposed delegate or representative, except so far as the act be authorized by the will of the principal Himself?

Again, the functions of the office lead to the same inference. To wash the sinner in the laver of regeneration, and to be the instrument of making him a child of God; to communicate to the faithful the body and blood of Christ, that they may be verily and indeed taken and received under the sign of the bread and wine; to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation in the name of God; to present the prayers of God’s people, and make them acceptable at the throne of grace; to pronounce the blessing of the Almighty on his

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20.

servants; and to convey to them absolution and forgiveness of their sins: all these are acts, which depend for their confirmation and value on the approbation of God: and that approbation is not to be expected, unless it be sought by means which may be judged agreeable to his will, inasmuch as they are practised according to his appointment.

The holy Scriptures accordingly represent the Divine authority, as necessary to sanction the undertaking of the ministerial office; and they prescribe an universal caution against the assumption of it without such authority. Speaking of those who "are taken from among men, and ordained for men in things pertaining to God<sup>1</sup>," the Apostle to the Hebrews says, "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high-priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee<sup>2</sup>." Thus the Divine authority has been esteemed necessary universally in the Church of God, whether before or since the Christian era. Under the law, the type and shadow of the Gospel, Aaron and his sons were "chosen, called, and separated by God, to minister unto him in the priest's office, and to burn incense before the Lord,

<sup>1</sup> Heb. v. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. v. 4, 5.

and to bless in his name for ever<sup>1.</sup>" Under the Gospel, at its original promulgation, this in common with the other legal types, was fulfilled by God's appointment of men to engage in the Christian priesthood. After the example of Christ himself, the first preachers of the Gospel received the seal of their ministry from heaven; either by the personal appointment of the Son of God, or by the designation of the Holy Ghost, or by the act of the holy Apostles, in pursuance of their Lord's original precept, and in compliance with the dictates of his Holy Spirit. Thus universal was the rule, that "no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God."

Nor was deviation from the rule esteemed of slight importance, or visited as a trivial offence. The Levites, who were dissatisfied with that less elevated station, which they held in the ministry, and unlawfully aspired to the priesthood, were punished by the Lord whom they "had provoked," and "went down alive into the pit<sup>2:</sup>" and the monarch, who infringed the sacerdotal functions, by attempting to "burn incense in the temple," was smitten with instantaneous and incurable leprosy for doing that, "which appertained not unto him, but to the priests, the sons of Aaron, that were consecrated to burn incense;" and he was driven

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxviii. 1. &c.

<sup>2</sup> Numb. xvi. 33.

“out of the sanctuary,” for he transgressed against the Lord<sup>1</sup>. Now the analogy, which the Apostle to the Hebrews alleges between the ministers under the two dispensations, would suffice to justify the application of these cases to the unauthorised assumption of the priestly office in the Christian Church, even if another Apostle had not made the application by denouncing “woe” on those “presumptuous” Christians, who “perished in the gainsaying of Korah<sup>2</sup>:” a denunciation, which infallibly proves, that a sin, essentially like that of Korah, did then and may exist in the Christian Church; and that the sin of Korah is calculated to call down from heaven some form of Korah’s punishment.

II. From the necessity of a Divine appointment to the ministerial office, we proceed to inquire the *mode* of that appointment. And first we observe, that it is not derived from mere *personal holiness* in the individual. Personal holiness is indeed an excellent quality to fit a man for being a candidate for the ministry; nor ought admission to be granted to any man who is deficient in that quality. But it is not a qualification for assuming and exercising the office, which must be conferred by an authoritative act. For holiness of life and

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. xxvi. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Jude, ver. 11.

holiness of office are as distinct from each other as cause and effect. Holiness of office is conferred on some, for the purpose of enabling holiness of life to be acquired by all. But this supposition confounds the distinction: and in effect it abolishes an appointment to the ministerial office altogether as a special commission: for thus every consistent Christian would be qualified to minister in holy things, and the designation of an order of men to execute the office would be nugatory and useless.

Again, if personal holiness were a qualification for undertaking the ministry, then our blessed Saviour, in the days of his flesh, needed not to wait for any other qualification: for He, in personal holiness, was perfect and unrivalled. Yet it was not till long after He had reached the age of manhood, that, on being designated to his ministry by a voice from heaven at his baptism, He took upon Himself his office: for, as St. Matthew subjoins to the narrative of that event, "From that time Jesus began to preach<sup>1</sup>:" "beginning then to be," as St. Luke informs us, "about thirty years of age<sup>2</sup>."

Again, if personal holiness were sufficient to qualify for the ministry without a particular appointment, an example, no doubt, or an affirmation

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iii. 17; iv. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Luke iii. 23.

to that effect would occur in the first constitution of the Church; but of such example or such affirmation no record is to be found; so that other qualification than that of personal holiness is required for preaching the word, and ministering the sacraments of Christ; even a commission by Christ's authority. Without such commission, the acts performed by such a pretended minister have no validity. Nay, as hath been well observed, "Whatever he may be in other respects, in this particular he is a grievous offender, and will be found guilty before God of sacrilegiously intruding into an office, to which he can have no pretensions: a crime, for which the leprosy once rose up in the forehead of a monarch; and Korah and all his company, holy as they said they all were, went down alive into the pit!."

III. The commission, of which we speak, is moreover distinct from *an inward call* to the ministry. Such a call, indeed, though not the effect of a strong, or sensible, or extraordinary impulse on the mind, nor perceptibly distinguishable from the ordinary operations of the Holy Spirit on the affections and wills of faithful Christians; and consisting in the main of a pious disposition, earnestly bent on setting forth God's glory, and

<sup>1</sup> Bp. Horne's Serm. Eph. iv. 7.

setting forward the salvation of his people, first by undergoing the requisite previous preparation, and then by submitting to the regular mode of appointment, and thus engaging in the work of the ministry: such an inward call, I say, is an important preliminary to the reception of the ministerial commission. And accordingly, for the purpose of ascertaining the state of mind of those who appear before the Bishop as candidates for the holy Order of Deacons, and of determining their fitness for being admitted to the Order, the first question propounded by him as the Church's representative is this, "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office and ministration, to serve God for the promoting of his glory, and the edifying of his people?" And upon the answer being returned by each candidate, "I trust so," the next step towards the ordination ensues. But this inward call, however important and necessary in a candidate, and however it may contribute to lead him on towards the ministry, does not put him into it: does not qualify him for taking the office upon him, and executing its functions without a further call.

Many reasons might be offered for this sort of call being not esteemed a sufficient qualification for the ministry. If an individual were allowed to be guided by his own feelings or judgment

alone in assuming the ministerial office, self-delusion would in numberless cases be the natural and inevitable result. Persons, not duly prepared for preaching the word of God, would thus intrude into the sacred ministry. The cause of pure religion and sound doctrine would be endangered, if persons not duly prepared were thus to come forward as the authorised preachers of God's word. And confusion and disorder must follow to an incalculable extent, if every man, however peculiar and extravagant his notions, were at liberty to propagate them, as if by Divine commission, at his own choice. Surely this would be to invert the Apostle's position, and to make "God the author," not "of peace," but "of confusion," in all the Church<sup>1</sup>. These considerations would lead us to anticipate, that a decision upon his inward call would not be left to the judgment of the individual who supposes himself to be so actuated: but that the candidate for the ministry would be subjected to some independent test, in order that having been "proved" and "found blameless," "full of wisdom and of honest report<sup>2</sup>," "holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience," he may be thereupon duly appointed to the office which he seeks.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 9, 10.

<sup>3</sup> Acts vi. 3.

Such caution was observed by the Apostles with respect to the lowest order of the Church: both by the twelve on their original creation of that order, and by St. Paul when he gave instructions concerning those on whom it should be conferred. Nor is that great Apostle less circumspect concerning those who were to be admitted to the higher orders of the ministry, specifying, with extreme earnestness and precision, the qualities of those who should be so ordained.

Reflexions, such as these, assist in showing the insufficieney of an inward call as a qualification by itself for the ministry, and concur with the fact that holy Scripture does not in any instance recognise the sufficiency of an inward call, either in words or by example. On the contrary in all cases, as it will presently be our business to show, another qualification was employed: so that even our blessed Lord Himself, "to whom the Spirit was not given by measure<sup>1</sup>," and who had therefore every qualification derivable from spiritual testimony, as well as from personal holiness, and who could not have been deceived by an error concerning his call; yet even He, as if for the very purpose of setting his disciples an example of the requisite caution and forbearance, waited for another qualification, before He entered on the

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 34.

office of his ministry, in an outward designation to the office.

IV. And so we come to the commission which is really valid and effectual for discharging the functions of the ministry: namely, *an outward commission*, which may not only give reasonable satisfaction to the individual that he is not deceived, but may give evidence to others likewise, that the individual has been duly appointed to the office of which he claims to be possessed.

Looking to the legal type, no man, we are told, "taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron:" but the call of Aaron by the Divine authority was openly made, and his commission was outward and publick: for chosen as he was and separated to the ministry by God's will, he was invested, anointed, and consecrated by the hand of Moses<sup>1</sup>. And it was after the like manner that his sons the inferior priests, and afterwards the Levites, were ordained to their several offices, which were by the same ordination conferred likewise on the posterity of each.

Following this example, our blessed Lord, as we have seen, did not take to himself the honour of the high priesthood, till He had been appointed to it by an outward commission: the commission,

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxix. Lev. viii. 1, &c. Numb. viii. 5, &c.

namely, of the voice from heaven in the presence of John the Baptist, and the assembled multitude, when He was designated to his office, “from which time Jesus began to preach.”

And of that restriction, to which He submitted in his own person, He gave examples in his practice concerning others. By an outward appointment of his own He commissioned his twelve Apostles, and besides them seventy other ministers of an inferior order, that they might duly execute their several functions. By an outward appointment He chose Matthias to take part in that ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell; and ordained him by the agency of the rest to be “numbered with the eleven Apostles<sup>1</sup>. ” By an outward appointment, Paul having been first “chosen” of the Lord, and announced to Ananias, as a special “vessel for bearing his name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the people of Israel<sup>2</sup>;” was afterwards with Barnabas “separated to the Holy Ghost by prophets and teachers” instructed on the occasion, “for the work whereunto he had called them<sup>3</sup>. ”

By outward appointment of the Apostles, following the example of their Lord, and actuated by the Holy Spirit, succeeding ministers of the Church were admitted to their office. “The gift of God which was in Timothy,” the gift of the mi-

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 24—26.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ix. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xiii. 2.

nistry, was conferred upon him by St. Paul, “with the putting on of the Apostles’ hands<sup>1</sup>:” and it was by the same Paul, that Titus was “appointed” to exercise the same gift of God by “setting in order<sup>2</sup>” things in Crete. “Elders in every Church” were “ordained<sup>3</sup>” by the Apostles with the like outward appointment. By the like outward appointment the office of deacon was conferred on those persons, whom the Apostles had ordered to be “looked out, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom<sup>4</sup>,” and whom they then invested with their ministerial commission. And it was by a like outward appointment that the ministerial character was imposed on those persons, whom with apostolical authority, and by apostolical advice, Titus “ordained<sup>5</sup>;” and on whom Timothy was charged to “lay hands, not suddenly<sup>6</sup>,” but after full proof of their personal fitness; with a discretionary power, therefore, either to admit or to reject such as aspired after the ministry.

V. An outward appointment being necessary for conferring the ministerial character, we next inquire who are *they that have authority* for conferring it. Now the same Divine authority, which is necessary for one man being ordained to the

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. i. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Tit. i. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xiv. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Acts vi. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Tit. i. 5.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Tim. v. 22.

ministry, is also necessary to warrant another in ordaining him. That, which a man cannot take unto himself, of himself he cannot bestow upon another. As God only is able to promise forgiveness of sins, and to institute sacraments as the means of grace and salvation, so he only is able to give authority for the sending of persons, who may pronounce the one and minister the other. Without such authority, no single person, no assembly of persons, can lawfully or effectually say to another, Take thou authority to be the steward of Christ's mysteries, the minister and ambassador of God. Presumptuous as such language must appear, and an infraction of God's prerogative, should any person or persons venture so to speak without Divine authority, the ministerial acts performed by those, thus pretended to be ordained, would not be lawful and effectual, nor could the sacraments, pretended to be by them administered, be accounted valid.

The authority, of which we speak, was given by our Lord to His Apostles; when, "as his Father had sent him, even so he sent them," to be the ministers of his Church: ministers, not only for dispensing the mysteries of God, but for commissioning others also to dispense them. To the conduct of the Apostles we therefore look for an answer to our inquiry. And there we perceive, that, when in execution of their commission they

ordained men to the ministry, they distinguished between the classes of those whom they ordained. To two classes of ministers they gave no order but that of a personal ministration: but in the case of those of the other class, to their other functions, they annexed the privilege, which they had themselves received from their Lord, of transmitting the ministerial office to others. "Lay hands suddenly on no man," the admonition of St. Paul to Timothy, is a plain recognition of Timothy's power of "laying on of hands," as the form of admitting others to the ministry. And, "for this cause left I thee in Crete," says the same Apostle to Titus, "that thou shouldest . . . ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: if any be blameless."

Thus the power of giving the ministerial commission was lawfully possessed by Timothy and Titus, the Bishops of Ephesus and Crete respectively; Bishops with the episcopal privilege of ordination. And whether or not that appellation be given to them in holy Scripture, as it unquestionably was used in the earliest succeeding writings of the Church, and as it has been used ever since, to describe the overseers of the Church as distinguished from ministers of the two inferior orders; or whether it may have been also at first applied to ministers of the second order, describing them as overseers of particular assemblies: the decision of that question does not at all affect the

proper episcopal authority possessed and exercised by the former, to the exception of the latter; any more than the fact of the term Imperator being given to the generals of armies, as well as to the Emperors of Rome, can be alleged in proof of a community of the proper imperial character.

It is not a mere name that we inquire about, but the power; the power which was not committed to ministers of an inferior order, but which was committed by Apostolical authority, and which, therefore, lawfully belonged to ministers of that order, of which Timothy and Titus were members. No evidence can be given of its being committed to others: so that, if all the elders or presbyters in Ephesus and Crete were called Bishops, the fact nevertheless remains the same, that to one alone in each was appropriated the ordaining power.

Timothy and Titus, then, were Bishops of Ephesus and Crete, with an authority properly episcopal in its peculiar sense, and superior to that of presbyters, whom in truth they governed as well as ordained. Similar authority was possessed by other contemporaries of the Apostles, and so in course by their successors in the episcopate. As for example, to mention names with which Christians are most familiar, by Symeon, son of Cleopas, Bishop of Jerusalem; by Mark, the Evangelist, the friend and companion of St. Peter, Bishop of Alexandria; by Clement, Bishop of Rome, the

friend and “fellow-labourer<sup>1</sup>” of St. Paul; by Stachys, St. Paul’s “beloved Stachys<sup>2</sup>,” Bishop of Byzantium; by Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, and by Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, both of them disciples of the Apostle St. John; by Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, the disciple of Polycarp; and by the several Bishops, constituted by the Apostles in the churches generally, as well as in those of the greatest distinction; of which the names of the Bishops from the beginning are recorded by the ecclesiastical historians, and in which the ministerial succession was kept up, and is computed, by the succession of Bishops, who are the chief governors of the churches, and not by the succession of those of an inferiour order.

The exercise of the power of ordination by the primitive Bishops is matter of historical notoriety. If any question however arise, concerning the existence or the origin of the power, the answer is supplied by St. Clement, one of the first Bishops of Rome, who informs us in what way provision was made, not for the immediate only, but also for future, successors to the Apostles, even by the Apostles themselves: for he says, that “the Apostles, foreknowing by the Lord Jesus Christ, that contests would arise concerning the episcopal name or office, did themselves appoint officers in

<sup>1</sup> 1 Phil. iv. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xvi. 9.

the Church: and not only so, lest that might be said to be of force only during their time, but that “they afterwards established an order, how when those, whom they had ordained, should die, fit and approved men should succeed them in their ministry;” and that, in constituting this order of things, “they were intrusted with their commission by God in Christ.” And about a century later, Irenæus thus describes the effect of this appointment: “We can reckon those Bishops who have been constituted by the Apostles and their successors, all the way to our times. And if the Apostles knew hidden mysteries, they would certainly have delivered them chiefly to those, to whom they committed the churches themselves, and whom they left their own successors, and in the same place of government as themselves. We have the successions of the Bishops, to whom the apostolick Church in every place was committed.” Tertullian, a few years later, gives a similar statement; and from him, as well as from writers both before and after him, it appears that the term, whereby these successors of the Apostles were designated, was limited and exclusive. “The High Priest, who is the Bishop, has the power of conferring baptism, and under him the Presbyters and Deacons: but not without the authority of the Bishop.” Much to the same effect as Ignatius asserted in the apostolical age, “It is not

lawful without the Bishop, either to baptize or celebrate the offices." . . . "Let no man do any thing of what appertains to the Church without the Bishop: let that sacrament be judged effectual and firm, which is dispensed by the Bishop, or by him to whom the Bishop has committed it."

The early history of the Church, both in England and in Ireland, is involved in a degree of obscurity, which precludes information on the precise period when Christianity was first preached in these islands. Thus much, however, may be safely affirmed, that whatever be determined on the question of the Gospel having been planted in Britain by St. Paul, or by some other Apostle, or by some Apostolical man, the Church in these countries was constituted and regulated upon the same principles which prevailed in every other. For the earliest accounts which we have received of the existence of Christianity in England, even before the arrival of Augustine, the Roman missionary, who transferred the archiepiscopal see from London to Canterbury, in the sixth century; and the earliest accounts of the Church of Ireland likewise; exhibit a co-existent establishment of episcopal authority. And that having been once established, we believe it to have continued in unbroken succession, not only because the supposition cannot be controverted or invalidated by shewing, "when, or how, or where this succession

broke, or seemed to break, or was likely to break;" but because the fact is generally supported by positive historical evidence, which proves the continued succession ; and because the doctrine having been received in every age of the Church, that no ordination was valid but that of Bishops, it was morally impossible that any persons could at any time be received as Bishops, who had not been so ordained.

Thus, then, handed down in regular succession through the different ages of the Church, the episcopal authority, now possessed by the ministers of our national Church, may be traced upwards from the present period to its primitive origin : till having been seen, by God's good Providence, to surmount the furious assaults of modern schemes of government of man's invention in the Great Rebellion, and to have come forth in its integrity from the fire of persecution which well nigh exhausted the vessels that contained it at the Reformation ; and having been followed in England through the seasons of the Norman, the Danish, and the Anglo-Saxon dynasties, in the course of the first named of which the more newly-imported episcopate was embodied with that which had been long settled in the native British Church ; and in Ireland, whose primeval episcopate has been transmitted through a single channel, the commencement of which coincides with her re-

corded adoption of the Christian faith : the ministerial commission is found to centre in the Apostles themselves, and through them in the Divine Founder of the Church, who had “ sent them even so as he had been sent by his Father.” So satisfactory is the proof of our possession of this necessary constituent of a lawful ministry ; such reason have we to be assured of the validity of the acts performed by our ministers, thus acting with the Divine commission.

And now, my brethren, let me observe, in application of this inquiry, how grateful the members of the united Church of England and Ireland ought to be for the merciful care of Almighty God, in that He has preserved in the part of his true Church established in this kingdom an uninterrupted succession of ministers, duly qualified by his authority to preach his holy word, and to administer his sacraments ; and so to confer on those, “ who rightly and by faith receive them<sup>1</sup>,” all the means ordained by Him for man’s salvation.

Secondly, let it be observed, how careful and constant the members of our national Church ought to be in profiting by the services of these his duly-constituted ministers : not seeking their spiritual edification through the agency of those,

<sup>1</sup> Art. xxvii.

who, for a regular outward commission, substitute a certain pretension to personal holiness or a supposed inward call; or who, claiming to themselves an outward commission, rest that claim upon the authority of others, who have either no authority at all, or at best a very questionable and unstable one, for sending men on the work of the ministry; but seeking edification through the ministry of those, who are "lawfully called and sent by men, who have authority in the congregation," authority derived ultimately from our Lord Himself, and transmitted from his Apostles by an uninterrupted episcopal succession, "to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard."

Lastly, let it be observed at the same time, how cautious we ought to be, in using a ministry thus effectual for our salvation in respect of the validity of its own acts, not to be deficient ourselves in those requisites which must qualify us for profiting by their ministry; not to rely on merely hearing God's word from their lips, or on merely receiving from their hands the sacramental pledges of grace and salvation: but to be diligent in hearing and receiving them with honest and good hearts, rightly and by faith, that so by the grace of God, of which these are the appointed means, we may bring forth fruit to perfection. All that we need at God's hands He has graciously provided for us, by supplying the means of grace in his holy

Church by a regular succession of his own duly-commissioned ministers. Be it the diligent care of his people so to employ these means of grace, that when his ministers are called upon to give account of their stewardship before the judgment-seat of their Lord, they may present you with holy joy, and with an humble adoption of his own language in reference to the commission derived from his own authority, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me<sup>1</sup>."

Almighty God, the Giver of all good gifts, who of thy Divine providence hast appointed divers orders of ministers in thy Church; give thy grace, we humbly beseech Thee, to all those who are called to any office and administration in the same: and so replenish them with the truth of thy doctrine, and endue them with innocency of life, that both by word and good example they may faithfully serve before Thee, to the glory of thy great Name, and the benefit of thy holy Church, through the merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Prayer in the Ember Weeks, and the Ordering of Priests.

## **DISCOURSE VIII.**

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### **THE MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH, THE VALIDITY OF THEIR ACTS.**

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**1 COR. iv. 1.**

**Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ,  
and stewards of the mysteries of God.**

**AFTER** our blessed Lord's resurrection, and before his ascension into heaven, He renewed to his Apostles the commission which He had before given them for the work of the ministry. He "sent them, even as he had been himself sent by his Father," to gather, to govern, and to instruct his Church: and He commissioned them to transmit the like authority to others in due succession; appointing them his legitimate representatives on earth in the discharge of the several functions of their ministry; and promising them his continual presence "alway, even unto the end of the world."

**It is in conformity with this commission of our**

Lord, subsequently conferred upon St. Paul by a special appointment, that that Apostle specifies in my text the character, wherein he desired that himself and his brethren in the dispensation of the Gospel should be “accounted of:” namely, “as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.” And it is in conformity with the same commission, that the Church, as with full propriety she may, transfers the character to those persons, who, with inferior powers indeed, but with lawful authority, and a commission regularly transmitted, have in subsequent ages succeeded the Apostles in the evangelical ministry. For in one of her Advent collects she teaches her congregations to beseech our Lord Jesus Christ to “grant that the ministers and stewards of his mysteries may so prepare and make ready his way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that at his second coming to judge the world we may be found an acceptable people in his sight.”

There is a disposition in the minds of some, particularly of those who have not paid due attention to the constitution and authority of the Church, and to the origin, nature, and end of the ministerial commission, as derived from her Divine Founder, as well as of those who would fain seek salvation by other means than those of which she is the vehicle: there is in such minds, I say, a

disposition to overlook the view in which St. Paul admonishes that the ministers of the Church should be accounted of; to be little careful in discriminating between their ministerial character and their personal qualities, or rather to confound the two together; so as to regard the real or supposed delinquencies of the man, as obliterating the impress and invalidating the acts of the minister, and to esteem themselves at liberty to despise and repudiate his ministrations, in favour of some unauthorised pretender to the ministry. But this is an error altogether: it proceeds on a misapprehension of the authority whence the ministerial commission is derived, and of the power by which its acts are rendered effectual, and of the ends to which it is designed to be subservient. It is calculated to produce perplexity in the minds of all Christians concerning their possession of the means of grace, and the soundness of their hope of salvation: it gives occasion for uncharitable sentiments and schismatical practices: and it manifests a disregard to those lessons, "which are written for our admonition," in the ensamples of the first "ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

"Do not suppose, my brethren, that it is my purpose to speak lightly of the personal delinquencies of the ministers of the Gospel. In any degree they are blameable, and ought, as far as possible,

to be avoided. In any great degree, they deserve severe censure, as injurious to God's honour, and the welfare of his Church. But a correct view of the account, which is, nevertheless, to be had of their office, and of the regard which is to be paid to their ministrations, is requisite for the vindication of God's ordinances, and for the guidance of his people in the use of them. Your attention, therefore, may be not unprofitably bestowed on an attempt to show, what, notwithstanding their personal defects, belongs to them in their official capacities; and that such defects do not impair their ministerial character or invalidate their ministerial acts.

I. First, the minister is the minister and servant of God. As personal holiness therefore does not qualify a man to take unto himself this office without an announcement of God's will through his accredited channel, so without the like announcement a defect of personal holiness does not disqualify him for holding the office: for that were to make God's authority of no avail. The office then being conferred and borne by Divine commission, the acts of the minister are valid; for they are in effect the acts of God, inasmuch as they are performed by his authority: and to represent the validity of his acts as depending on the personal holiness of the administrator, rather

than on the value of the acts themselves, as acts of God's appointment, is to depreciate God's power. "Who then," that we may adopt the Apostle's language, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers? . . . So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase<sup>1</sup>."

Thus again, the minister performs his functions, as "Christ's ambassador<sup>2</sup>" lawfully appointed, and "in Christ's stead." The covenants then which he makes, agreeably to the terms of his embassy, are valid acts, whatever be the personal defects of the ambassador, by virtue of his credentials and of his Master's name.

Thus again, the minister acts as "the steward of Christ's mysteries," to the due reception of which, lawfully administered, the blessing of Christ is promised. Whatever then be the personal qualities of the administrator, the mysteries themselves are effectual in conveying the promised blessing to the receiver, because Christ "is faithful who promised".<sup>3</sup> The promise indeed is made on the condition of a right disposition: but that right disposition is required not in the minister, but in the receiver. On the part of the minister, however much for manifold reasons personal good-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 5. 7.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. x. 23.

ness is to be desired, the only necessary condition or qualification for giving efficacy to these mysteries is a lawful call and appointment.

Further: to suppose that the validity of ministerial acts depends on the personal goodness of the minister is to derogate from God's honour, and to transfer his glory to his humble creatures, "as though by their own power and holiness<sup>1</sup>" they could make sinners whole. But, what says St. Paul? "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us<sup>2</sup>:" the excellency of the power, and withal the glory of the performance. The treasure continues to be precious, whatever be the nature of the vessel to which it is committed; the means of grace and salvation are effectual for the welfare of others, though dispensed by evil stewards; that the honour may be of God, and not of men.

II. But let us look to another purpose, for which the ministerial commission was at first, and continues to be, conferred. There is a Divine grace given to men for their own sanctification: and this is given to the individual, and received by him, without respect to others, but that it may be effectual for his own salvation. There is also a

<sup>1</sup> Acts iii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 7.

Divine grace given to some men, for the sanctification of the Church; "for the perfecting of the saints; for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ<sup>1</sup>." They who receive this grace are thereby constituted publick officers; and invested with proper credentials: authenticity is given to their performances, and they are enabled to act for the benefit of the Church and of her members, in respect of the remission of sins, and the collation of spiritual privileges, in a way, wherein others, with whatever superiority of intellectual or moral endowments, cannot act, forasmuch as, not being duly commissioned, they are not in possession of ministerial grace. Thus the end, for which this grace is given, requires the validity of the acts, for which it is given, to be perpetuated: and to deny the validity of such acts is to involve the sanctification of the Church and the salvation of her members in the personal delinquencies of her ministers, and to nullify the purpose of God's ordinance.

III. If indeed the validity of the saeraments depended on the personal holiness of the minister, no person could ever be sure that he received them. For whatever be the outward appearance of an individual, it is by the inward qualities of

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 12.

the heart, that the real character is determined; and God only trieth the heart. No man can penetrate the heart of another; no man can be sure that the heart of another is right before God; no man can be sure of another's personal holiness; no man therefore can be sure that the sacraments are valid as administered by a minister, if personal holiness in the administrator be admitted as essential to the validity of their administration. And thus the ill effect of this opinion appears to be the same in kind as that of the Romish doctrine, which ascribes the efficacy of the sacraments to the intention of the minister at the time of administration: the same in kind, but greater in degree, for he may have more command of his intention, and be able to give more plain and unequivocal proofs of it, than of his holiness.

Besides, if personal delinquency can invalidate ministerial acts, we may reasonably inquire, to what extent such delinquency must reach that it may possess the neutralising power; and to what extent it may innocently go, without countervailing God's ordinance. All men, ministers of religion as well as others, are prone to sin, and guilty of many offences. No man, no minister of religion rather than another, is exempt from sin, and personally pure in God's sight. Where then shall we find a rule which may enable us to distinguish between him, who is so far free from sin as to

exercise his ministry effectually, and him who is so far guilty, as to determine that his ministry has lost its efficacy, and ought to be abandoned?

IV. Connected with this, another objection is presented by the propensity, which the opinion in question naturally fosters, to uncharitableness, censoriousness, arrogance, and an undue assumption of authority; encouraging the people to sit in judgment on their pastors, to pry into their defects and faults with an unsparing eye, and so to pronounce them unworthy of their office, and disqualified for exercising its functions.

V. And herewith is connected another objection, arising from the tendency to introduce unlawful pastors to the ministry of holy things. For those, who repudiate their lawful pastors, will, of course, unless they reject the ministerial office altogether, "heap to themselves<sup>1</sup>" others. And thus with the desecration and degradation of those, whom God has appointed to the sacred ministry, is combined the elevation and acknowledgment of those whom God has appointed not.

And what then becomes of those holy ordinances, for the due administration of which Christ ordained his Apostles, and "sent them even as he

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 3.

had been sent by his Father?" And what is to be thought of the dissensions and schisms, which necessarily distract those who ought to be united as one flock under one shepherd? It was this notion of the disqualifying effect of ministerial delinquency, and a consequent attachment to those of their own persuasion, as being the only worthy, which contributed, with other errors, in old time, to separate the sect of the Donatists from the Catholick world, so that they admitted no baptism to be valid but such as was administered by themselves. A similar effect of the same principles was manifested amongst some of the sectaries, who disgraced and injured the Church of Christ at the time of the Reformation, especially the German anabaptists. And from the same evil fountain has issued the same bitter water in this our day, when many of those, who "profess and call themselves Christians," have lost sight of the idea of the one Catholick and Apostolick Church administered by a lawful and duly commissioned priesthood, and substituted that of irregular societies of their own making, and ministers chosen and appointed by themselves.

VI. But in further aid of our judgment, as to the effect of personal unworthiness on the official acts of Christ's ministers, let us look to examples

which bear upon the question, as set forth in holy Scripture. Under the Law we may find instances of great unworthiness in the then ministers of God's Church: take especially those of Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, in the second chapter of the first book of Samuel. Great, as was the wickedness of these "sons of Belial," the people were not excused from bringing them their sacrifices. The sacrifices were accepted: the people lost none of the benefits annexed to the priestly ministrations: but the priests themselves perished for their sins.

Consult the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, and see the real personal character of the Scribes and Pharisees, as they were in our Saviour's time. To personal holiness it is manifest that these men could have advanced no reasonable claim; of the greatest enormities it is manifest that they were guilty. But they stood to the Jews in the relation of the legitimate and authoritative teachers of the Law of Moses. And what said our Saviour concerning them to the people? "The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not." He admonishes the people, we see, of the wickedness of these evil teachers of the Law: he cautions

them against their evil example: but he commands them nevertheless to attend their teaching of the Law, and to follow their instructions.

Consult further the tenth chapter of the same Gospel; and read the enumeration of the twelve disciples, whom also Christ named Apostles, and sent them forth with authority to "preach the kingdom of heaven," and withal to "heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils." This enumeration closes with the name of "Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him," or, as St. Luke says, "which also was the traitor." He had likewise gained the character of "a thief<sup>1</sup>:" and our Lord Himself emphatically describes him as "a devil<sup>2</sup>." It is nowhere intimated, that this grace of the apostleship was less efficacious in the hands of Judas, than in those of the other eleven: that the wickedness of the traitor invalidated the commission of his Lord: nor is it to be believed, that our gracious Saviour, who knew the hearts of all men, would have conferred the commission upon one, in whom it would be ineffectual for the benefit of those, who might "in an honest and good heart" desire to profit by the traitor's ministry. No! the ministerial acts of this unworthy Apostle were as effectual in those who rightly partook of them as those of his worthier brethren:

<sup>1</sup> John xii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> John vi. 70.

and chosen as he doubtless was for some good purpose, it is highly probable that he was chosen for the very purpose of leaving an example, that the excellence of the ministerial commission should be estimated by the authority of the Divine Giver, and not by the personal qualities of the recipient: and that, however unworthy be the men who receive it, the sin of man cannot overcome and nullify the power of God.

But, indeed, the case may be further illustrated from the characters of the other Apostles; of whom it may be affirmed, on the warrant of their own writings, that they were none of them free from sin: that so far were they from being free from sin, that three days only before they received from their Lord their apostolical commission, they had been guilty of a great offence, for one had denied, and all had forsaken him: that Peter had confessed himself to be “a sinful man<sup>1</sup>:” that it was the acknowledgment of James, “in many things we offend all<sup>2</sup>;” “we,” thus including himself in the number of offenders: that it was avowed by John, he also including himself in the general proposition, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us<sup>3</sup>:” that Peter was “to be blamed, for that he, together with Barnabas, walked not uprightly,

<sup>1</sup> Luke v. 8.

<sup>2</sup> James iii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John i. 8.

according to the tradition of the Gospel<sup>1</sup>:" that Paul and Barnabas were "men of like passions<sup>2</sup>" with other men, and subject therefore to the like infirmities, of which indeed they gave proof, when there was "so sharp a contention between them, that they parted asunder the one from the other"<sup>3</sup> on their apostolical journey: that Paul, who describes himself as "the chief of sinners<sup>4</sup>," supposed it possible, that "after he had preached to others," from want of due subjection of his body" he himself "might be a castaway<sup>5</sup>." Consider the cases of these men, as without question divinely constituted ministers, but beset with personal weakness and sinfulness as men. Admit the supposed relation between the goodness of the individual, and the validity of his official acts: and no sufficient evidence will be adducible to prove, that the means of grace and salvation can ever have been effectually dispensed in the Church from the period of its first institution.

But in truth the Scriptures give no sanction to the opinion, that the acts, performed by the Apostles with the Divine authority, could have been invalidated by their own personal delinquencies, however great, and whatever might be the consequences to themselves. They give no intima-

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiv. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xv. 39.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. i. 15.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 27.

tion that their sin and punishment would bring withal a loss of spiritual grace on those who partook rightly of their ministrations. On the contrary, a very different inference is to be drawn from the declaration of our Lord Himself, that at the last day, to some who may appeal to Him on the ground of their performances in his name, that they have "prophesied in his name, and in his name have cast out devils, and in his name have done many wonderful works," he will answer, "I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity<sup>1</sup>." Hence it seems that a power of performing miracles may have been lodged in men, so deficient in personal holiness as to call down upon them from their Lord the appellation of "workers of iniquity," and a sentence of banishment from his presence. Surely, then, it is a just conclusion, that even in persons of the same iniquitous character may be lodged the power of effectually performing those functions, which are ordinarily by God's providence necessary for the continuance and edification of the Church, and for the welfare of her people.

I shall conclude this argument with a striking passage from one of Bishop Andrewes's Whit-Sunday Sermons. "An error it is, an old worn out error of the Donatists, and but new dressed over

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 22, 23.

by some fanatical spirits in our days, that teach in corners. One, that is not himself inwardly holy, cannot be the means of holiness to another. Fond ignorant men! For hath not the Church long since defined it positively, that the baptism, which Peter gave, was no better than that which Judas: and exemplified it that a seal of iron will give as perfect a stamp as one of gold? That as the carpenters that built the ark, wherein Noah was saved, were themselves drowned in the flood; that as the water of baptism, that sends the child to heaven, is itself cast down the kennel; semblably is it with these. And they that by the word, the sacraments, the keys, are unto others the conduits of grace, to make them fructify in all good works, may well so be, though themselves remain unfruitful, as do the pipes of wood or lead, that, by transmitting the water, make the garden to bear both herbs and flowers, though themselves never bear any. And let that content us, that what is here received, *for us* it is received; that what is given them, is given them *for us*; and is given *us* by them. Sever the office from the man: leave the men to God, to whom they stand or fall; let the ordinance of God stand fast. The breath of the Holy Ghost, though not into them for themselves, yet goeth into, and through, every act of their office and ministry, and by them conveyeth his saving grace into us all."

The doctrine which has been now proposed and maintained is to the same effect as that laid down by the Church in the twenty-sixth Article of Religion, "Of the unworthiness of the ministers, which hinders not the effect of the sacrament;" for in that Article her judgment is thus delivered: "Although in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the ministration of the Word and Sacraments; yet forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name but in Christ's, and do minister by his commission and authority, we may use their ministry, both in hearing the Word of God, and in the receiving of the sacraments. Neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as by faith and rightly do receive the sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men."

But whilst the Church, from a due reverence for our Lord's ordinances, and in full reliance upon his promise for their efficacy, asserts their validity when ministered to worthy recipients by lawfully commissioned and thus qualified agents, though these agents be personally evil men; let it not for a moment be supposed that she is indifferent to the personal qualities of her ministers,

or would willingly suffer the ministerial commission to be intrusted to any one, but to those, who may be expected with the office of Christ's ambassadors to combine the recommendation of a Christian life. She is too well aware of the tendency of wickedness in the minister, not indeed "to take away the effect of Christ's ordinance," absolutely considered, nor to "diminish the grace of God's gifts from such as by faith and rightly do receive the sacraments ministered unto them;" but to operate injuriously on her people, by causing them to turn away from the ministrations of such a minister, and to decline a participation in the rite which he dispenses; or by abating in their minds that faith and those right dispositions, which are required as qualifications for the benefit of the receiver.

There is no more honourable feature in the character of the Church; no one more calculated to recommend her as the Church of the living God, endeavouring in all things to adorn the doctrine of God her Saviour; than the watchful solicitude with which she guards against the admission of unworthy ministers into the Lord's vineyard. This solicitude is less obvious to her members in general, because it is testified by a part of her provisions for publick service, which, from the very nature and intent of it, is less prominently and less frequently brought before the minds of her

people; at the use of which but a small number of her people has opportunities of being present, and that but rarely and in few places; and which in fact, (a fact, worthy of being lamented, and, as it may well be, of being amended,) does not commonly form a part of those copies of the Book of Common Prayer, which are in general circulation among the members of the Church at large. I allude to the Forms which are appointed for the solemn Ordination of ministers to their several offices and administrations in the Church.

It were probably impossible to produce any writing, not the acknowledged effusion of direct inspiration, so distinguished by an impressive and awful solemnity of admonition, as the exhortation which the ordaining Bishop is directed to address to the candidates for the Order of Priesthood, immediately before their admission to that holy function. The great importance of the office, whereunto they are called; how high is the dignity, and how weighty is the charge; how precious is the treasure committed to their keeping, and the greatness of the fault of any negligence on their part, and the horrible punishment that will ensue; the never-ceasing labour, and care, and diligence, which is their bounden duty; the continual caution that neither they themselves offend, nor be occasion that others offend; the duty and necessity of praying earnestly for God's Holy Spi-

rit; the duty of continually reading and learning the Holy Scriptures, and of framing the manners both of themselves, and of those that specially pertain unto them according to the rule of the same Scriptures; and for this self-same cause, the duty of forsaking and setting aside, as much as they may, all worldly cares and studies: all these things are set forth and prest upon the conscience of the candidates, with a strength of language, and an earnestness of manner, and a cogency of reasoning and application, which are calculated, if any thing human can be, not only to awaken a corresponding feeling and suitable good resolutions at the moment, but to keep a permanent hold on the mind and heart at all future times.

Meanwhile the questions which are demanded of the candidates, and the plain answers to those things, which, in the name of God and of his Church, the Bishop requires of them touching their duties, have all the effect which the Church can give them towards perpetuating and strengthening the influence of the foregoing address.

Such in particular are the several promises, which, in common with others less immediately bearing upon our present topick, the candidates pledge themselves to perform, “the Lord being their helper:” as, that “they will be diligent in prayers, and in reading of the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of

the same, laying aside the study of the world and of the flesh :" that they " will be diligent to frame and fashion their own selves and their families, according to the doctrine of Christ ; and to make both themselves and them, as much as in them lieth, wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ :" that they " will maintain and set forwards, as much as lieth in them, quietness, peace, and love, among all Christian people ; and especially among them that are or shall be committed to their care."

It is in pursuance of these exhortations, and in consequence of these promises, commemorated with earnest and repeated prayer to Almighty God, and subsequently ratified and confirmed by the celebration of the holy Communion, that authority to execute the office and work of a priest in the Church of God is then committed to the candidate by the imposition of the Bishop's hands. Thus, every thing is done on the Church's part to produce personal holiness in her ministers, by arguments and engagements of the most powerful kind ; and to effect, that they who are called to their sacred office and ministration may be made to realise her supplication ; and, whilst they are " replenished with the truth of God's doctrine," may be " endued likewise with innocency of life :" so that it is not for want of exhortations and admonitions given, or of solemn pledges and stipula-

tions demanded and received, if her ministers be deficient in personal worthiness; if they be less diligent than becomes their holy profession in the exercises of devotion and the pursuits of religious learning, and more addicted to worldly studies and worldly amusements; if they be less diligent in framing their own lives and conversation, and those of their families, into exemplars of holy living, and wholesome patterns for their flocks to follow; or if they be less diligent in maintaining and setting forth among their flocks, and generally among all Christians, as much as lieth in them, quietness, peace, and love. Some of the Church's provisions in this behalf have been submitted to your thoughts: and if in such things as these we, her ministers, are blameable, the fault lies not with the Church, whose disposition to keep us in the right way is manifested by her doing what she can by means of religious and moral obligations, possessed as she is of little power to do more, but with us who are too heedless of her admonitions and of our own engagements, and are thus properly chargeable with the guilt, and liable to the punishment.

Reverting, however, to the principal object of this Discourse, let me remind you, in conclusion, that whatever be *our* guilt, and whatever may be *our* punishment, for which we are in the hands of

our heavenly Master, by *you* we are still to be “accounted of as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God ;” and that our ministerial acts still continue effectual for the spiritual good of those, “who rightly and by faith receive them.” Do not then dishonour God by imagining that, if his ministers are frail, He is weak ; if his ambassadors are unworthy, He is unfaithful ; if the dispensers of his ordinances are men of human passions and infirmities, his ordinances have therefore ceased to be Divine. And further, do not dishonour Him by refusing to partake in his ordinances, because they are dispensed by those, whom you may esteem evil men. And “be not high-minded but fear ;” and beware, lest from an apprehension of the unworthiness of your ministers, you incur a charge of sinfulness against yourselves, by repudiating those whom God has sent for your edification ; and by turning your backs on the provisions, which, when duly administered, He has appointed to be your means of grace ; and shutting yourselves out of the Church, which He has built for your salvation, “on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner stone.” Rather persevere ye steadfastly in the communion of his Church, receive faithfully and rightfully his appointed means, continue steadfastly in fellowship with his ministers ; and be assured that He, whose name is holy, whose word

is truth, and whose strength is made perfect in weakness, will supply the defects of his servants by his own perfections, and will provide that they who trust in Him shall not be confounded.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who hast purchased to Thyself an universal Church by the precious blood of thy dear Son; mercifully look upon the same, and so guide and govern the minds of thy servants, the Bishops and Pastors of Thy flock, that they may lay hands suddenly on no man, but faithfully and wisely make choice of fit persons to serve in the sacred ministry of thy Church. And to those which are ordained to any holy function give Thy grace and heavenly benediction; that both by their life and doctrine they may set forth Thy glory, and set forward the salvation of all men; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Prayer in the Ember Weeks.

## **DISCOURSE IX.**

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**THE MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH, THEIR ANSWERS  
AT ORDINATION.**

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*An Address to Candidates for Holy Orders.*

**GENTLEMEN,**

YOUR examination, which has been undertaken in obedience to the directions of the Church, for the purpose of ascertaining your fitness to be admitted to that Order for which you are respectively candidates, being now completed, I consider that it may be neither unbecoming in me, nor unprofitable for you, if I address to you a few words of exhortation, with respect to the obligations which you are now incurring, and which some of you have already partly incurred. I shall, therefore, beg your attention, whilst I advert, in as summary a manner as the case will admit, to the chief of those obligations, suggested as they are by the

ordination services, and to which your express assent will be, or has been already, required in the face of the assembled congregation.

You have been engaged in this room in a private examination, that you might therein give proof of the sufficiency of your information and the correctness of your principles in religious knowledge, for the satisfaction of us who are intrusted with the charge of ordaining you. But another and a publick examination still awaits you, in which you will be required to "answer plainly to those things, which we, in the name of God and of his Church, shall demand of you, touching" your future duties.

It is in a practical view that I purpose to lay before you some particulars of such your appointed examination. And in the observations, to which I am inviting your attention, I shall not be studious to distinguish between those engagements which are formed respectively by the candidates for Deacons' or for Priests' Orders, forasmuch as those, who are now candidates for the latter, have already incurred the obligations specially belonging to the former order; and as those, who are now desirous of being admitted into the Order of Deacons, are doubtless looking forward to the period, when they may be qualified for admission to the Order of Priesthood. I shall have an eye therefore rather to the duties of the sacred pro-

fession generally, than to those of one or the other of these two orders of it.

I. It is much to be remarked, that the first question, which the Church by the mouth of one of her governors propounds to the candidate for her ministry, has reference to the motive by which he is actuated to engage in it. "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, to take upon you this office and ministration, to serve God for the promotion of his glory, and the edification of his people?" To which the candidate is directed to answer, "I trust so:" an answer which no candidate can safely render, unless he be fully resolved in the discharge of his office and ministration to labour as a faithful servant of God, to study to promote God's glory, and to advance the spiritual welfare of those of God's people who may be committed to his charge. He, who enters upon the ministry with such a resolution, may I think safely venture to entertain and express a well-grounded confidence, that the inward motion, which actuates him to the undertaking, is from the Holy Ghost. But remember, I pray you, and let it be never banished from your minds, that a reference to this exposition of the question will supply you at all times with an evidence to the fact of your being, or of your not being, under the influence of God's Holy Spirit. Let it be a con-

tinual subject of your inquiry, whether your conduct is such as becomes the servants of God ; whether it is directed to the promotion of God's glory, and to the edifying of his people. If it be such, continually acknowledge with grateful hearts the influence of the good Spirit of God ; and support yourselves, or rather beg of him to support you, in the performance of your duty, by the consolatory, the encouraging, and animating reflexion, that you are still actuated in the discharge of your office and ministration by the same Divine power, by which you trusted that you were moved to take it upon you. But if your conscience condemn you of abandoning or neglecting God's service, of being indifferent to his glory, or being careless of the souls of his people, you have too sufficient reason to be assured that you have "neither part nor lot in this matter," and that "your heart is not right in the sight of God<sup>1</sup>."

II. The next question proposed to you is, whether "you think in your heart that you are truly called, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the due order of this realm," or, "of the United Church of England and Ireland, to the ministry of the Church?" I notice this question more especially for the purpose of remarking to

<sup>1</sup> Acts viii. 21.

you, that your ordination is to be understood as admitting you to the ministry of that particular part of the Church of Christ established in this kingdom, upon the faith of your avowed conviction of the genuineness of the ministerial commission, as conferred in that particular part of Christ's Church. Upon the declared principles of our national Church, it is not a matter of indifference, whether or not a man have an outward call to the ministry, nor by whom or in what manner he be called. On the contrary, whatever be his presumed inward call, she judges that an outward call also is necessary, and that such outward call must be given by persons who have lawful authority to give it: and she has accordingly provided a "due order" for thus calling men to the ministry in a manner agreeable to the word of God. In pursuance of this she deems it requisite to be declared by her ministers, that they "think themselves in their hearts to be truly called to the ministry," not only "according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ," but "according also to the due order of this realm and Church." A persuasion of the necessity of an external commission, and of the lawfulness and validity of the provisions by which you are to be admitted to your ministry; of the apostolical authority of the person by whom, and of the scriptural excellence of the form and manner by which, you are admitted, ought to be

the ground of such an opinion : and an unshaken attachment to the Church, to the ministry of which you are thus admitted, ought to be the never-failing result of it.

III. I proceed to remark upon the rule of faith, which the Church next points out to the notice of candidates for the ministry; and to the rule of teaching, which she accordingly prescribes to them. In the former particular, you declare yourselves to be “persuaded, that the holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ:” in the latter you declare yourselves to be “determined, by God’s grace, out of the said Scriptures to instruct the people committed to your charge; and to teach nothing as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture.”

This is not the fit season for exhorting you to consider the grounds of a persuasion concerning the sufficiency of the doctrine of Holy Scripture for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ: as you are about to declare that such is your persuasion, so I trust that the grounds, on which that persuasion rests, have been carefully examined by you already; and that your minds are already furnished with reasons, whereby they are satisfied of the sufficiency of the holy Scriptures, to the ex-

clusion of any paramount or equivalent rule of faith. Still it may be not unseasonable, if you be admonished of the propriety of securing and confirming yourselves in this persuasion, especially with a view to those who have added to the written word of God the conceits and traditions of men. This distinction lies at the root of the whole controversy between the Churches of Rome and of this kingdom ; and it is therefore one, with which the ministers of our reformed Church ought to be thoroughly and familiarly acquainted.

At the same time, be it observed, that, as you avow the Scriptures to be your rule of faith, so also you pledge yourselves that they shall be your rule of teaching. By them, whatever you teach in your ministry, as necessary to eternal salvation, must in your judgment be capable of being “ concluded and proved.” You must be careful therefore that your instructions to your people, whether in publick or in private, be strictly scriptural ; be strictly agreeable to the written word of God. If they be not so, you surrender the principle by which, as protestant clergymen, you are distinguished ; and you forfeit withal the pledge, on the credit of which our scriptural Church admits you to her ministry.

IV. But whilst a rule of faith and of teaching is thus supplied to you, you are moreover supplied

with a rule of conduct in the performance of your ministerial obligations: for in the next place you pledge yourselves, that you "will, by the help of the Lord, give your faithful diligence, always so to minister the doctrine and sacraments, and the discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church and realm hath received the same, according to the commandments of God; so that you will teach the people committed to your cure and charge, with all diligence to keep and observe the same."

The office, to which you are about to be ordained, is that of ministers of the Church of Christ, as established in England and Ireland: and in execution of that office you are hereby bound to conduct your ministrations in conformity to that doctrine which the Church professes, and those rites and regulations which the Church hath prescribed for her ministers; these being admitted by you in this engagement to be "according to the commandments of God." Her profession of Christian doctrine is contained in the Book of Common Prayer, and in the Articles of Religion, appended thereto: and her regulations relative to the Christian sacraments and discipline are contained also for the most part in the same Book of Common Prayer; in those directions, which, from their having been formerly printed in a red letter, are still commonly called *Rubrics*.

I wish particularly to impress upon your minds the duty, under which your professional vows will place you, not only of steadfastly adhering to the "doctrine of Christ," as professed by our national Church, but of faithfully and diligently conducting your ministrations by the rule of her directions. In the stipulations, which at this time you have entered into, you engage that you will "conform to the Liturgy of the United Church of England and Ireland, as by law established." In the Canon, "Of the prescript form of Divine Service, contained in the Book of Common Prayer," which you have at this time subscribed, it is ruled, and you have by your subscription pledged yourselves to an observance of the rule, that "that form of liturgy or divine service, and no other, shall be used in any Church of this realm, but that which is established by the law, and comprised in the Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments." And in the Ordination Service, in which you are, if it please God, to take part to-morrow, you will be called upon to repeat the same pledge in the form of words, to which I have already adverted. It is too plain a truth to need being enlarged on, that the ministers of the Church are thus strictly engaged to guide their ministrations by the rule of the Rubrick, and not to deviate from that rule. Nor can I possibly understand, how a man can reconcile it to his own

conscience to undertake the ministry, without a full determination beforehand, with God's help, to act according to that rule ; or to execute his ministry, without carefully and constantly observing it. The cases, in which deviation is necessary, are indeed extremely rare : nor is deviation in common cases justified by custom, or example, or the authority even of your superiors, supposing for a moment you had such motives to deviate : for no authority is paramount to the laws of the Church and of the realm, agreeable as they are to the Divine law; and to the observance of those laws you voluntarily and knowingly engage yourselves.

I have said perhaps upon this subject more than the extreme plainness of the case may seem to call for : but I should not have said it, if I did not suspect, that, plain as the case is, it is not always clearly apprehended, or at least faithfully observed. I repeat then, that the Rubricks of the Book of Common Prayer are your chief rule of conduct in the discharge of your ministry ; and that you are not at liberty to violate or neglect them. And to this I add that it is also your duty to persuade your congregations, so far as possible, to be guided by the same rule, especially with respect to the ministration of the two sacraments, to catechetical instruction and confirmation, to attendance upon, and participation of, the prayers of the Church, and to the hearing of sermons ;

forasmuch as you promise that you will "teach the people committed to your cure and charge with all diligence to keep and observe the same."

V. Your conduct in the next department of professional duty is less accurately defined than in that on which I have been just insisting: I allude to the engagement, which you are called upon to form, that "the Lord being your helper, you will be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word; and to use both publick and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the whole within your cures, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given." Your line of conduct, I say, in this department of clerical duty is not definitely traced: and no doubt there is room for much judgment and discrimination, especially with respect to the former part of this engagement. Still I cannot but be of opinion that the faithful and conscientious minister will not fail to find ample occasion for, the discreet indeed, but withal the zealous and active exercise of his faculties, at least in securing the members of his own congregation from the infection of "erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word," if not in "banishing and driving away" all such doctrines from the minds of others, without laying himself open to the charge of being

fondly disputatious, or “a busy body in other men’s matters.”

Meanwhile, with respect to the latter part of the engagement, I would press upon your consciences the vast importance of establishing and maintaining, as far as possible, a personal intercourse with the several families and individuals within your cures; and the claim which is possessed upon your pastoral offices, and generally upon your kind services and attention, by those whom it hath pleased Divine Providence to deprive of the power of profiting by your ministry, otherwise than by means of your private monitions and exhortations, and of your assistance in guiding their devotions at their own homes. There is no more necessary branch of a clergyman’s duty, than his attendance on the sick, the aged, and the infirm. And at the same time there is none, which, unobtrusive as it is in the eyes of men, is better calculated to make him well pleasing in the eyes of that Being, who “seeth in secret, but shall reward openly.” If I wished for the best criterion of faithful diligence in a minister of the Gospel, I should seek it no where rather than in a vigilant attendance upon his sick parishioners.

Under this department of your professional engagements, I would wish to advert in passing to the diligence, which “need” continually “requires,” and for which I doubt not “occasion” will in almost

all cases be easily “given,” in providing for the education of the poor. And I would beg you to consider whether, in providing for their education, you can be doing your duty as ministers of religion, unless religion form a principal feature in your instructions : or as ministers of the established religion in particular, unless instruction in the religion of Christ, as professed by the Church of which you are ministers, be carefully inculcated.

I shall dismiss this topick with one other remark : namely, that whatever diligence the Church may call upon you, and it may in consequence be your duty, to practise, in any of the respects which have been noticed, or in any others which will be perpetually offering themselves to the mind of a watchful and conscientious clergyman, such diligence is to be limited within the sphere of your own particular cures. According to the principles of our Church, the care of a particular parish is, or rather will be, intrusted to each of you ; and your ordination will have given you no authority to act but in the congregation which shall be committed to your cure by your lawful superior : so that whatever praise may be justly due to the zealous minister, whose “zeal is according to knowledge,” it is not, I apprehend, a judicious or well-tempered zeal, on the contrary, it is an indiscreet, an irregular, and an unlawful zeal, which

prompts a clergyman to expatriate beyond the limits of his own charge, and to interfere with the charge and labours of another.

VI. I pass forward to the notice of your next engagement, namely, that "the Lord being your helper, you will endeavour to be diligent in prayers, and in reading the holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the world and of the flesh." This obligation is manifestly two-fold; being both of a positive and of a negative kind. It positively engages you to diligence in private devotion, in the study of the holy Scriptures, and in such other studies as may conduce to your acquaintance with that holy Book: negatively, it engages you to withdraw your attention from occupations, which are not connected with, which cannot be made subservient to, this great work.

With respect to the former branch of the obligation, I may confidently affirm, that nothing is more necessary, more indispensable, to a clergyman, than the due fulfilment of this engagement. For as, without supplicating the blessing of God upon your own diligence, you cannot reasonably hope that you shall become wise yourselves, or be able to make others "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus," so you cannot reasonably hope that you will acquire that

faculty, unless you employ your best diligence as the means of acquiring it; and give the full power of your minds to the reading of the holy Scriptures, and such studies as may be subservient to your advance in scriptural learning. I must not enlarge on this topick. But I cannot refrain from adding my opinion, so important a part is this of a clergyman's obligations, that it were well for every candidate for holy orders to consider the possession of a certain biblical apparatus, as a necessary part of his provision for the ministry; and for every clergyman to spare some portion, however slender, from his income, for supplying himself with such an apparatus. Theological works, especially expositions of the holy Scripture, and of the formularies of our Church, are the tools of our profession, as the holy Scriptures themselves are our materials. It is by their means that you may be enabled to prove yourselves "workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." But without possessing and employing such means as these, you can hardly have the satisfaction of a good conscience in believing, that you "do the work of an evangelist, and make full proof of your ministry."

With respect to the latter branch of the obligation now under our consideration, I shall be contented with remarking, that, as you pledge yourselves by undertaking that obligation to "lay

aside the study of the world and of the flesh," so the pursuit of worldly occupations and amusements will be neither compatible with your other employments, nor will, I think, be much desired by you, if you devote yourselves, as you have promised, to the pursuits and studies of your profession.

VII. The next engagement which you incur relates to your personal character and conduct: for you promise, that "the Lord being your helper, you will apply all your diligence to frame and fashion your own lives, and the lives of your families, according to the doctrine of Christ, and to make both yourselves and them, as much as lieth in you, wholesome examples of the flock of Christ."

On the importance of this obligation to the success of your ministry, as well as to the salvation of your own souls, I need not enlarge. I would rather observe, that the obligation should be considered as having respect, not only to the great essential duties of Christianity, but to other matters of minor and subordinate importance; to every thing, in short, which can be thought to give consistency and perfection to the Christian character, or to promote, though only by secondary means, the glory of God. Thus, if you act according to this engagement, your conduct will be marked, not only by purity of morals, but

by considerateness and sedateness of manners. Your language will be distinguished by its freedom, not only from every expression of a profane or irreligious tendency, and from all “foolishness, and filthy talking, and jesting, which are not convenient,” unworthy of the lips of any Christian, and most of all of a Christian minister, but from every expression which might indicate an unbecoming levity of sentiment, an excessive earnestness about worldly affairs, or an intense delight in worldly pleasures.

But this diligence is to be applied to “the framing and fashioning not of your own lives” only, but “the lives of your families” also, “according to the doctrine of Christ; so that you may make not yourselves only, but, as far as lieth in you, them also, wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ.” This undertaking must be discharged by the various ways of superintendance, instruction, advice, control, encouragement, reproof. But two particular methods appear desirable to be specified: namely, the engaging of your families, together with yourselves, in the daily offices of domestick devotion, and in the periodical publick services of the Church. No clergyman, who omits either of these particulars in his treatment of his family, can be said to do “all that lieth in him” for their improvement, and for the edification in consequence of his flock at large.

VIII. It naturally follows upon the engagement to a Christian life, that you are further required to undertake, that "you will maintain and set forwards, as much as lieth in you, quietness, peace, and love among all Christian people, and especially among them that are committed to your charge." Such an endeavour appears indeed to form an essential constituent in a Christian character, and especially in the character of a minister of the Gospel of peace. Under the influence of this pledge, you will feel yourselves, I think, required to abstain, as far as possible, from litigiousness with your parishioners, from political controversies, and from religious feuds; and not only to abstain from such conduct as may disturb the peace of society or of your neighbourhood, but to practise such as may be calculated to promote and insure it. A steadfast adherence to the form of Christianity professed and practised in the Church of which you are ministers, and the training of your people to the same, is no deviation from this rule; provided you conduct yourselves with courteousness, gentleness, moderation, and Christian charity, towards those who dissent or separate from the Church, and encourage your flocks in the like peaceable, quiet, and charitable demeanour. To act thus you will judge to be your duty, resulting from the present obligation: nor can you perform a duty, more conducive to

your own eternal happiness, as well as to your present honour and usefulness. You know by whom it has been said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

IX. It remains only to notice one other engagement, which the Church requires of her candidates for holy orders, namely, that you undertake "reverently to obey your Ordinary and other chief ministers, unto whom is committed the charge and government over you, following with a glad mind and will their godly admonitions, and submitting yourselves to their godly judgments." By "the Ordinary," no doubt the Bishop of the diocese is, generally speaking, here intended, he having ordinary jurisdiction in ecclesiastical matters. "Of the other chief ministers," in relation to the parochial clergy, the Archdeacon appears to be the principal in dioceses where he exercises jurisdiction.

The rule and limits of the respect and deference due from you by virtue of this engagement may be judged to be, that in all matters of spiritual and ecclesiastical concern, in all matters which affect the welfare of religion and of the Church, it is the duty of the Clergy to comply with the advice, and to acquiesce in the decision, of their Ordinary, unless his authority be superseded by a paramount or superior power. If the law of God,

or the law of the country, clearly and indisputably prescribe a different course, their authority surpasses that of the Bishop, and ought to be preferred. If neither of these authorities clearly interferes with it, then, I apprehend, they concur in sanctioning and supporting it: and it becomes the duty of the clergy to “follow with a glad mind and will the admonitions” of their lawful governor, though abstractedly their inclinations may lead them in a different course; and to submit their judgment to the judgment of their official superior, though abstractedly they may not be convinced of the correctness of his decision.

Thus, to apply this principle in a particular case, suppose a parochial minister to be of opinion, that he has a right to employ a stranger in the ministrations of the Church committed to his charge, without the permission of his Ordinary; but suppose the Ordinary to be of opinion, that his permission is requisite for the employment of a stranger; and suppose him therefore to require, that without his permission a stranger be not employed in any parish of his diocese: what, in such a case, is the inferior minister to do? Is he, in compliance with his opinion in favour of a fancied but controverted right, to act in opposition to the opinion and directions of his superior, and thus commit a breach of a known duty? Or is he to submit to the judgment of his superior, and to

follow with a glad mind and will his admonition, thus performing a plain and palpable duty, though at the sacrifice of an imagined right? In proposing this case, I am, for the sake of the illustration, admitting a question, where I am convinced that no reasonable ground of question exists: for it is essential to the episcopal office, that every inferior minister who officiates in a diocese should be deemed subject to the Bishop's jurisdiction. But, supposing such a case as I have stated, the case of a difference of opinion between the Bishop and a parochial clergyman of his diocese on a point of ecclesiastical discipline, what, I ask, in such a case, should the parochial clergyman do? Why, surely, in such a case, where no superior law can be alleged to warrant disobedience to his Ordinary, his ordination vow calls upon him for obedience, though he may in his own mind doubt the correctness of the Ordinary's decision. This is indeed the sort of case which puts to the test the principle of obedience. For those things, which are good or bad, right or wrong, of themselves, ought to be respectively done or forborne, whether or not our superiors command them. It is in matters of an ambiguous or indifferent kind, that the principle of obedience to our superiors is brought into action; and in such matters we ought to do or forbear as we are directed, because obedience itself is a virtue and a duty.

I have thus gone briefly and summarily, as the time will allow, through the engagements which the Church requires to be made by her candidates for Holy Orders: and I have suggested to your minds such reflexions, as seemed most likely to be practically useful to you in the discharge of the solemn trust which is about to be committed to you. I am persuaded that there is no better study for a clergyman than the ordination services of our Church, both the particular parts of them which my course of observation has led me to specify, and the other portions of them likewise, most especially that awful and alarming exhortation, which the Bishop is directed to address to the candidates in the ordering of Priests. These services, I trust, have been already made the subject of your most earnest consideration and prayers; and that they have produced or strengthened in you sincere resolutions, to conduct yourselves, by God's grace, in the ministry of his Church after a manner worthy of your high and holy vocation.

I shall now conclude, with offering you two words of admonition, the propriety of which will probably be obvious without any lengthened argument to recommend them. One is, that you will employ some portion of the interval between this time and our re-assembling to-morrow for the purpose of the intended solemnity, in reperusing the service, in which you are to take so important a

part, and in meditating upon your engagements, with humble prayer to Almighty God, through the mediation of his Son, and for the sanctifying grace of his Holy Spirit, that you may be enabled to observe and fulfil them. My other advice is, that you will never suffer any considerable portion of time to elapse, without refreshing your memories as to the engagements which you will have formed, by a careful reperusal of the Ordination services, nor without strengthening your good resolutions by repeated and earnest supplication for assistance in your endeavours to act as faithful ministers of Christ.

I pray God, my brethren, to give you his blessing: to “prevent you in all your doings with his most gracious favour, and to further you with his continual help, that in all your works begun, continued, and ended in Him, you may glorify his holy name, and finally by his mercy obtain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

*Note.—The sentiments, briefly expressed in the foregoing Address, are expanded in a small volume by the Author, intitled “The CLERGYMAN’s OBLIGATIONS considered; as to the celebration of divine worship, ministration of the sacraments, instruction of the poor, preaching, and other official duties; and as to his personal character, and conduct, his occupations, amusements, and intercourse with others; with particular reference to the ORDINATION Vow.” Second edition, 12mo. W. Parker, Oxford; Messrs. Rivington, London.*

## DISCOURSE X.

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### THE CHURCH'S PROVISIONS FOR HOLY BAPTISM.

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MARK x. 13—16.

And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

THE Church introduces this very pleasing and affecting narrative into her Ministration of the Publick Baptism of Infants, with a lively appeal to the attention of the people: "Hear the words of the Gospel written by St. Mark, in the tenth chapter, at the thirteenth verse." And after the reading of the passage, she directs the minister to make a brief exhortation upon the words of the Gospel:

"Beloved, ye hear in this Gospel the words of our Saviour Christ, that He commanded the children to be brought unto Him; how He blamed those that would have kept them from Him; how He exhorteth all men to follow their innocency. Ye perceive how by his outward gesture and deed He declared his good-will toward them; for He embraced them in his arms, He laid his hands upon them, and blessed them. Doubt ye not, therefore, but earnestly believe, that He will likewise favourably receive this present infant; that He will embrace him with the arms of his mercy; that He will give unto him the blessing of eternal life, and make him partaker of his everlasting kingdom."

Thus the Church makes application of a passage, which, although not spoken by our blessed Saviour with express reference to the holy sacrament of Baptism, was anciently applied to it with great and manifest propriety, as indicating the will of Christ that little children should be brought unto Him; and, if brought at all, then plainly by the way of his own appointment. And, according to the doctrine and practice of the Catholick Church, she gives assurance out of holy Scripture, whereby we may be "persuaded of the good-will of our heavenly Father towards such children, declared by his Son Jesus Christ;" and may be "nothing doubting, but that He favourably allow-

eth this charitable work of ours in bringing the infants to his holy Baptism."

I have chosen this narrative of our blessed Lord's language and conduct concerning little children, with its application by the Church, as a fit introduction to a Discourse, wherein it is my purpose, with God's grace, to draw your thoughts to the Church's provisions for bringing young children to our Saviour Christ by means of his holy Baptism ; taking for my guide the duties of the three classes of persons, who either by office, or by natural relation, or by a voluntary undertaking, are engaged in this charitable work ; and directing your attention, in the first place, to the Church's minister, "by whose office and ministry the infant is to be dedicated to the Lord."

I. I speak of the *minister of the Church* as the person, by whom the child is to be baptized. For the commission to baptize, together with that of preaching the Gospel, was given by our Lord to his Apostles, and by them transmitted to other ministers, whether they were those who succeeded the Apostles in the government of the Church, or those who were called to inferior orders and administrations in the same. In a word, to all persons, lawfully called and sent, with Christ's commission, the ministration of Baptism unquestionably belongs.

Bat this ministration belongs to no other persons than those, who are sent with Christ's commission. For the appointment of Christ is necessary to authorize the performance of any act in his name, and to give assurance of any accompanying blessings. Such is the sacrament of Baptism, administered as it is in the name of Christ, and ordained for the purpose of conveying with it remission of sins and spiritual regeneration ; the ordinance " wherein we are to be made members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven." But no authority to minister Baptism having been given to any others than Christ's ministers, it should seem that Baptism, as well as the preaching of the Gospel and the ministration of the other sacrament, cannot lawfully, and with assurance of its efficacy, be celebrated by any others.

And this is agreeable to the rules of the Church. For although there may have been aforetime some, who have pleaded for the ministration of Baptism in cases of great necessity by another person than a lawful minister, where a lawful minister could not be had ; and although the Church of Rome, acting under the persuasion of the absolute necessity of Baptism to salvation, has allowed persons, not having the ministerial commission, to baptize in such cases ; and, although in the earliest age of our Reformed Church, under the influence of the

like persuasion, inherited from the Romish Church, allowance was likewise given for such a practice: yet, subsequently, following the judgment and example of the early Church, she discerned her error, and retraced her steps; and by three successive corrections of her decision, first, by a restrictive explanation of her former law in Queen Elizabeth's time, and then in King James the First's, and again in King Charles the Second's, by a new and positive provision, she determined, that even private Baptism, in cases of great necessity, should be ministered only by a lawful minister. And the ground of her determination must be judged to be, that however excellent be the sacrament of Baptism by reason of its spiritual grace, that grace is not promised except to its due administration; and that it were better to omit the rite altogether, and to leave the child to the uncovenanted mercy of God, than to make pretence of ministering it unlawfully, and thus attempt to bring the child into covenant with God by an instrument not of his appointment.

You see, then, that it is a "lawful minister," from whom the members of the Church are to seek the Baptism of their children; and, of course, "the minister of the parish" in all ordinary cases; though "in cases of great cause and necessity," where "need compels" them to seek for private Baptism, they may, "in the absence" of the mi-

nister of the parish, have recourse to "any other lawful minister that can be procured." Even in such cases of "need," however, the Church does not permit the baptismal sacrament to be administered, as it was intimated that she did in the years first following the Reformation, "by any one of them that be present," that is, by any lay-person; but she limits the ministration to "a lawful minister," to one authorized by Christ's commission to minister it, and therefore qualified to minister it with effect.

II. And so we pass on from the officiating minister, to consider the course which the Church prescribes for *parents* with respect both to the *time* and *place* of their children's Baptism, that so they may, at the proper season, and with all due solemnities, be brought unto Christ.

And hence we may be led to remark, that it is the first duty of parents to procure the Baptism of their children on the first convenient occasion after their birth. As the mode of admitting children into covenant with God, the eighth day was appointed by the Lord himself for the circumcision of infants under the law. No precise day is appointed to us by God for the administration of the Christian sacrament of Baptism. But our Church, who, in conformity with the spirit of our Saviour's institution of Baptism, and with the

practice of the apostolical and primitive Church, maintains the propriety of children being made partakers of the Christian covenant, declares it to be incumbent upon parents, and requires her ministers often to admonish them, that “they defer not the Baptism of their children longer than the first or second Sunday next after their birth, or other holy-day falling between, unless upon a great and reasonable cause, to be approved by the curate.”

Nor have we far to look for the reason of this admonition. For if the affirmation of St. Paul be worthy of attention, that “through the mercy of God our Saviour we are saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;” and if we may rely upon our Saviour’s declaration to Nicodemus, that “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;” and as he further explains himself, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;” and if by St. Paul’s expression, “the washing of regeneration,” and by our Saviour’s phrases of being “born again,” and “being born of water and of the Spirit,” is intended the sacrament of Baptism: (and that this is their real signification is not only most unequivocally taught by our Church, in a number of plain and perspicuous passages in her Liturgy and Articles, especially in

her baptismal offices and her Catechism, but was likewise universally taught and believed by the whole Church of Christ throughout Christendom for fifteen hundred years after the first preaching of the Gospel;) then does the Church, to which we have the happiness of belonging, reasonably, and wisely, and charitably require, that children should at the earliest seasonable opportunity be made partakers of that sacrament, which is pronounced by Christ Himself and his Apostle to be, through the ministration of the Holy Spirit, the means whereby they are to be saved, to be admitted into the kingdom of God on earth, and to be made capable of entering into the kingdom of God in heaven.

And the same reason, which induces the Church to be thus solicitous for the early Baptism of children, should operate surely, with at least equal force, upon the conduct of parents. Some persons, indeed, may be fondly disposed to amuse and busy themselves with inquiring, *whether*, and if at all, *why*, any difference will be made in the future condition of children, incapable as they all are of actual sin, accordingly as they may die baptized or unbaptized. Such inquiries, however, appear to show an inquisitive and presumptuous, rather than a pious and humble, spirit. For, that I may use the language of one of the brightest luminaries of the English Church, the learned and judi-

eious Hooker, “ When our Lord and Saviour promiseth eternal life, is it any otherwise than as He promised restitution of health unto Naaman the Syrian, namely, with this condition, Wash and be clean? or as to them which were stung of serpents, health by beholding the brazen serpent? If Christ Himself which giveth salvation do require Baptism; it is not for us that look for salvation to sound and examine him, whether unbaptized persons may be saved; but seriously to do that which is required, and religiously to fear the danger which may grow by want thereof. Had Christ only declared his will to have all men baptized, and not acquainted us with any cause why Baptism is necessary, our ignorance in the reason of that He enjoineth might, perhaps, have hindered somewhat the forwardness of our obedience thereunto; whereas now being taught that Baptism is necessary to take away sin, how have we the fear of God in our hearts, if care of delivering men’s souls from sin do not move us to use all means for their Baptism?”

At the same time let it be remembered, that however God by the secret ways of his own incomprehensible mercy may be thought to save without Baptism those children, who, without any fault of their own, but altogether from the neglect of their parents, may have lost the opportunity of participating in that privilege, to which, as the

children of Christian parents, they were entitled ; the parents themselves have not the like reason to expect indulgence for their neglect, by which they will have done all that lay in their power toward excluding their children from salvation. They for the hardness of their hearts may perish, although their children through God's unspeakable mercy may be saved. "God," saith the same venerable author, whose words I have already cited, referring to a remarkable incident related in the fourth chapter of Exodus, "God, which did not afflict that innocent, whose circumcision Moses had over-long deferred, took revenge upon Moses himself for the injury which was done through so great neglect; giving us thereby to understand, that they, whom God's own mercy saveth without us, are on our parts notwithstanding, and as much as in us lieth, even destroyed, when under insufficient pretences we defraud them of such ordinary outward helps as we should exhibit."

By the law of Christ infants are *admissible* to Baptism from the very instant of their birth : by the Church, the interpreter and administrator of the law, they are *required* to be admitted at a very early stage of their lives : and those parents, who wantonly neglect to have them so admitted, will do well, instead of speculating upon the possible result to their children, to reflect upon the probable consequences of their neglect to them-

selves ; and to consider, whether, if their children die unbaptized, they must not be regarded as guilty of casting away the souls of their children, notwithstanding the children themselves may be saved by the free mercy of God.

Before I pass on to the next duty of parents in this behalf, it may be here expedient to observe, that where their neglect has been prolonged beyond the infancy of their offspring, and the child is now arrived at years of discretion, it becomes his duty to supply the previous omission, and to procure the administration of Baptism for himself, according to the Form which the Church has provided for such cases : a duty, manifestly resulting from the uses of that sacrament, as already briefly specified ; and corroborated, if corroboration be wanted, by the resemblance between this case and that of him, who at a like age refused the rite of circumcision ; and thus exposed himself to the punishment of being “cut off from his people, for he had broken the covenant of God.” But upon this topick I cannot at present insist at length.

We proceed, therefore, to consider a second duty of parents ; who, as they are required to procure the Baptism of their children at an early season, so ought to procure it to be administered, if possible, publickly at church : agreeably to that injunction in the Rubrick, of which your ministers

are directed to warn you, that "without great cause and necessity you procure not your children to be baptized at home in your houses;" or, as it is afterwards expressed, except "in times of extremity," and unless "need shall compel you so to do."

A disposition sometimes prevails amongst the members of our congregations, to procure the Baptism of their children at home, in accommodation to their own personal ease, or humour, or convenience. And if Baptism be nothing more than a civil ceremony, of no other use than, as some persons vainly imagine, to be made subservient to the worldly interests of the baptized; let it be regarded and treated accordingly. But in the name of Him, by whom Baptism was ordained, is it no more than this? Is it not rather a most holy religious office? And if so, where can it be so properly administered, as in places peculiarly dedicated to the offices of religion? Is not the end of the ordinance to admit the baptized person into the Church of Christ, and to initiate him into the privileges of it? And if so, where with such propriety as in the presence of a congregation, solemnly and conspicuously assembled for the publick worship of God, and in evidence of their communion with the Church, of which they appear as a portion, and may be fitly considered the representative? Is it not the purport of the office, to receive from the baptized, in his own person or

in that of his sureties, a profession of Christian faith and obedience, and to confer upon him the promise of the Christian blessings? Where, then, with such propriety as in the presence of a regular assembly of Christians, who, having previously been participants in the same ceremony, do now both witness the dedication of the newly-baptized to God, and his reception "into the number of Christ's Church;" and are at the same time put in remembrance of their own profession made to God in their Baptism, and of the duties which they then faithfully promised that they would perform, and of the covenanted blessings to which they were thereby entitled? In one word, as an able ritualist sums up the case, "the ordinance is certainly publick: publick in the nature and end of it; and therefore such ought the celebration of it to be." (*Wheatly* on the Book of Common Prayer.)

I have made these remarks as leading you to perceive, not only how unexceptionable, but how worthy of all honour and observance, are the provisions of the Church with respect to the administration of Baptism. By her general rule, she requires children to be brought to the baptismal font, that there, in the presence of the congregation, "they may be baptized with water and the Holy Ghost, and received into Christ's holy Church, and be made lively members of the same." Anxious,

at the same time, that the sacrament should not be withheld from those, who from weakness may be unfit to be brought into the congregation, "in times of extremity," as she expresses herself, where there is "great cause and necessity," where "need compels;" expressions, evidently pointing, as indeed they are commonly interpreted to point, to cases where there is danger of death; she has provided a brief and compendious service, whereby that which is essential to the sacrament may be administered at home. Still, if the child which has been thus baptized do afterwards live, she pronounces it expedient that it be brought into the church, there to be publickly recognised by the minister for a Christian, and to be formally received into the congregation of Christ's flock. Other Baptism, than publickly at the font in ordinary cases; or, privately in houses, in cases of great need and extremity; but even in such cases, if the event permit, to be followed by a publick consecration of the child to Christ; the Church allows not: for any other she makes no provision. With those forms of administering it, which she has provided, and with no others, we, as her ministers, esteem ourselves bound to comply for conscience-sake: and we admonish you, who are parents, to do the same, and by no means to reject, despise, or evade them; and that, not only on account of the authority, which prescribes

them, though indeed the authority of our rulers might be of itself a sufficient motive to obedience; but also forasmuch as our authorized forms are founded upon general principles of reason, upon the usages of the early Church, and upon the nature and end of this ordinance of Christ.

III. When parents have provided for the early and publick Baptism of their children, their further duty is so to bring them up, that the children may perform their part of the covenant into which they have been admitted. This duty parents derive from nature: the same is voluntarily undertaken by that description of persons, who having been used for a similar purpose in the ancient Jewish Church, and thence derived into the Church of Christ, are mentioned as then in use, even as soon as the second century, by some of the earliest writers; were continued through the succeeding ages; and having been thus recommended by their antiquity and perpetuity in the Church, as well as by their utility, have been constantly preserved, notwithstanding the objections of modern sectaries, in our branch of the Catholick Church: being known under the appellation of "godfathers and godmothers," spiritual parents, indicating the new and spiritual relation which the infant contracts by his new birth at his Baptism; or of "sureties," as they are also called by reason of the security which

they give to the Church for the Christian education of her children, so far as they may be permitted, and as they have the power to interpose, if the parents be neglectful of this their natural duty, or if it please God to deprive the children of their care.

Hence the Church determines in her canons, that "no parent is to be admitted to answer as godfather for his own child," because she would thereby lose that additional security for the child's religious training, which, as supplemental to the parent's natural obligation, it is the design of this institution to engage. And for a different, but equally excellent reason she also determines, that "no person be admitted godfather or godmother before the said person, so undertaking, hath received the holy Communion:" for no person, who is so ignorant or so heedless of a Christian's obligations, as not to be a communicator in this distinguishing article of Christian worship, can be qualified to provide that a child be taught "all those things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health," and to see that he "be virtuously brought up to lead a godly and a Christian life."

These are preliminary provisions for the welfare of the little children brought by Baptism unto Christ, whereby the Church endeavours to secure the good and effectual services of those who take upon

them this spiritual paternity, and become pledged by a sacred suretyship to her in the children's behalf. Her further provisions to the same effect will appear from a survey of their duty, as comprised in the Exhortation delivered to the godfathers and godmothers at the conclusion of the office of Baptism, and where we shall find it to consist of three distinct parts.

The first duty, then, which these spiritual parents have to perform towards the child, for whom they are sureties; a duty, manifestly incumbent upon the natural parents likewise; is to "see that he be taught, so soon as he shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession he has made by them" at his baptism: in other words, to see that he be instructed in the nature of the covenant, into which he then entered by his sureties; and in those matters, both of belief and of practice, which he then by his sureties promised that he would both believe and do.

As this duty is thus clearly pointed out in the office of Baptism, so also are the means of performing the duty. "That he may know these things the better," (these are the words which the minister is directed to use to the child's sureties,) "ye shall call upon him to hear sermons; and chiefly ye shall provide that he may learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments in the vulgar tongue;" (that is, in the com-

mon language of the country, to distinguish it from the Latin, which before the Reformation was in use for religious services;) “ and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health.”

According to this injunction, the manner of fulfilling the duty of providing religious instruction for a godchild, is two-fold. The former is that of causing him to join in the publick assemblies of the Church, there to hear the principles of his religious belief and practice declared and explained to him from the pulpit by the authorized minister of God's word: the latter, which indeed is impressed with particular emphasis, that of providing for him more special religious instruction. The particulars of this instruction are the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, together with the other parts of the Church Catechism, which was composed and set forth for that purpose: and which, when thoroughly learned, I do not mean retained only verbally in the memory, but so learned as to be clearly understood and properly digested, may be well said to contain generally “all things, which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health.”

It is not required, nor can it be expected, that all godfathers and godmothers should give this instruction in their own persons. Where they have it in their power, and as favourable opportu-

nities arise, personal instruction is incumbent on them : but by many sureties, from a want of information, or of opportunity, or from various other causes, such instruction cannot be supplied. All of them, however, are engaged to provide that it be given, as far as their means will allow, particularly by representing to parents the sacredness of their duty towards their children in a matter of such importance, if the parents be remiss in performing it ; by taking a more active and efficient part in the event of the parents' decease ; by supplying the child with such easy and useful books as may contribute to his improvement ; by endeavouring, as far as in them lies, that he be placed under such instructors, and in such a course of instruction, as will enable him to learn those things, which they are bound and have pledged themselves to see that he be taught ; by providing, as far as may depend on them, that he be put under the care of his parish minister, to be ordered and instructed by him, as the Church requires, in the Catechism, and therewithal in the general knowledge of his religious duty ; and by various other methods, which it may be difficult to specify beforehand, but which will occasionally present themselves to the minds of those persons, who are anxious to fulfil the solemn charge, which they have voluntarily undertaken.

The next duty of godfathers and godmothers

towards the child, for whom they appear at Baptism, is to provide “that he be virtuously brought up to lead a godly and a Christian life.” As in the former case they were to take care that the child should receive such religious instruction as is generally necessary to salvation; so in the present are they to provide, that this instruction operate upon the practice of the child. As then they are required by the former injunction to see that their godchild be brought to Church, in order that he may hear the sermons of the minister; so by the present injunction are they to make the same provision, in order that he may join in the prayers of the congregation. And as they were before required to employ all the means that they could command towards instructing the child in the nature of the covenant into which he had entered; so are they now required to employ the same means, towards inducing him to fulfil the conditions of the covenant.

Their third and concluding duty is to take care, that “the child be brought to the Bishop to be confirmed by him, so soon as he can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments in the vulgar tongue; and be further instructed in the Church Catechism set forth for that purpose.” A duty this, which completes the charitable task that they had undertaken: and which, if they shall have conscientiously executed what was be-

fore required of them, they will cheerfully and easily perform.

Before I dismiss this topick of the duties of godfathers and godmothers, let me briefly remark, that those persons are greatly in an error who conceive, that when they appear at the font in the capacity of sponsors for a child, they are merely offering an idle compliment, or engaging in an affair of momentary form and ceremony. The direct contrary to this is in reality the truth. In the name of the infant, whom they represent, they make "a solemn vow, promise, and profession," of which they must, in the ordinary course of things, be bound to see the execution on the part of the infant, and which they are at the same time expressly admonished by the minister that it is their parts and duties to see fulfilled. Nay, more, these duties are imposed upon them by their own free and voluntary choice: the natural parents indeed lie under an obligation, imposed upon them by the great laws of nature, to provide for the spiritual welfare of their children; but godfathers and godmothers spontaneously undertake the like charge, the execution of which, therefore, should at all times be matter of concern to them, but, especially in the event of the neglect or death of the natural parents, should be an object of their earnest endeavours. And those persons, therefore, who do appear in this capacity, and who do thus volun-

tarily enter on a sacred engagement, would do well to consider, how they will answer to God and to their own consciences for the destruction of any child, towards whom they may have neglected that duty, which they had solemnly pledged themselves to fulfil.

In laying before you these remarks upon the several duties which belong respectively to the persons concerned in bringing young children to Christ by his baptismal ordinance, I trust that I am actuated by a proper veneration for the dignity of that holy sacrament, which I fear is not always regarded with the reverence and seriousness of attention which it deserves, as an ordinance of our blessed Saviour's institution, as the mean by which we are admitted into the covenant of grace, and as the occasion of very sacred obligations.

The Church, for her part, has done all that she can for maintaining the character of this holy mystery, by directing her ministers to be frequent in their instructions to the people concerning their duty in relation to it; by prescribing rules herself for the special guidance of parents; by enacting wholesome cautions for procuring fit and sufficient sureties; and withal by providing an order of ministering the sacrament, surpassed by no other office in her inimitable liturgy, for scriptural purity of doctrine, for earnestness of devotion, for solemn-

nity of admonition, for tenderness of parental affection towards the little children, whom she is bringing to their Saviour Christ.

But are these laudable provisions of the Church met with corresponding feelings by those for whose use they are intended? Are her ministers so watchful and active in pressing her injunctions upon the people? Are parents so willing to be instructed in this respect by the ministers of religion? are they indeed properly sensible of the character of Baptism as a holy religious ordinance and means of grace? and are they not rather apt to regard it as a ceremony, indifferent in a religious view, and no further requiring their attention, than as it may at some future period be rendered subservient to the temporal interests of themselves or of their children? Are sureties so deeply impressed with the obligation which they incur? and do they not frequently undertake the office out of compliment to the parents, and reflect not at all upon the duties to the children, which they actually bind themselves to perform? And, then, the sacred order of Baptism itself, is it so carefully ministered, with such circumstances of time and place and ceremonial solemnity, with such impressiveness of manner in the minister, with such intelligent and cordial concurrence in the partakers, and with such reverential attention in the congregation, if indeed in most instances

there be any congregation to witness the ministration, as the provisions of the Church merit, or rather as the holy character of our Lord's own ordinance demands?

Such questions, if carefully considered and conscientiously answered, might probably, by God's blessing, improve the conduct of many, who are engaged in the solemn office of bringing young children to Christ by holy Baptism. For this purpose, and with this hope, the subject has been now submitted to your thoughts. "Consider then what I say; and the Lord give you understanding in all things;" and enable us all to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

Lord of all power and might, who art the Author and Giver of all good things; graft in our hearts the love of thy Name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Collect for the Seventh Sunday after Trinity.

## DISCOURSE XI.

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### THE CHURCH'S CARE FOR THE RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION OF HER CHILDREN.

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JOHN xiv. 6.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

THE speaker of these words was the merciful Saviour of mankind: the person, to whom they were addressed, was primarily and directly the Apostle Thomas, and afterwards in him every conscientious inquirer concerning everlasting happiness: the words themselves are of the utmost importance, indicating to such an inquirer the means, and the only means, whereby he can attain to the knowledge, the favour, and the fruition of God.

The words originated in a consolatory assurance of our blessed Lord to his Apostles, that although He was then about to leave them, yet they should

"not let their hearts be troubled," for that He was going to his Father's house, wherein were "many mansions," and where He would "prepare a place for them;" that so He might "come again, and receive them to himself; that where he was, there they might be also." This assurance gave occasion to an inquiry in one of his hearers, concerning the place, to which He was going, and the course which they were to pursue in following him. The text is part of the reply to this inquiry: it distinctly points out the end, which the inquirer was to set before him, and the means, by which he was to attain it; and it conveys the information in language calculated to elevate the Apostle's mind from the erroneous notions, which he partook in common with his brethren, of earthly grandeur, to a contemplation of spiritual and celestial felicity. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me:" or, as we humbly and reverently conceive the meaning of the words may be expressed: The source of consolation during my approaching absence from you must be, not the prospect of any temporal distinction, but the assured hope of future happiness in the heavenly mansions of my Father: the method, by which you must strive to arrive at those mansions, must be, not an observance of the rules of worldly policy, but a steadfast devotion to me, the only

Mediator between God and men: “I am the way,” to guide you; “I am the truth,” to instruct you; “I am the life,” to animate you: by me, and by me only, by virtue of that blood, which I am about to shed as an atonement and propitiation for the sins of the world, are the gates of heaven opened, and an avenue prepared to the kingdom of the Father: and if you will tread in “the way,” which I prescribe to you, if you will adhere to “the truth,” in which I instruct you, if you be enlivened and invigorated by that principle of spiritual “life,” which I promise to impart, you shall be hereafter admitted to partake with me of the fulness of my Father’s joy.

To spread and inforce the knowledge of this fundamental doctrine of our religion; to explain it, to dilate upon it, to exhibit it in its various bearings, to trace it through the successive series of God’s revelations, to make manifest its importance and necessity to the whole system of the Christian faith, is the prime, the indispensable, the never-ceasing duty of the ministers of the Gospel. Whether we be engaged in the office of private or of publick instruction; whether in instilling “the principles of the doctrine of Christ<sup>1</sup>” into the youthful mind, or in assisting and encouraging the

<sup>1</sup> Heb. vi. 1.

more aged to "go on unto perfection;" whether in laying the firm foundation of Christian knowledge, or in endeavouring to erect the goodly superstructure of Christian holiness: we must be sedulous in preaching Him, by whom alone "any man can come unto the Father." Would we teach men what they must *do* to be saved? We must impress on them the directions of Him, who is "the way." Would we teach them what they must *believe*? We must inculcate on them the doctrines of Him, who is "the truth." Would we instruct them how they must be *animated* by his Spirit. We must insist upon the ordinances of Him, who is "the life." In a word, we must take heed to the inforcing of the distinguishing precepts, the distinguishing doctrines, and the distinguishing institutions of Christianity, as we value the privileges of the Christian dispensation, and are anxious to "save ourselves and them that hear us<sup>1</sup>."

With this persuasion, as to the leading principles on which every department of religious instruction should be conducted, I feel a high gratification, as a minister of the Gospel according to the pure profession of the United Church of England and Ireland, in addressing myself to you, as members of the same apostolical Church, in behalf

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 16.

of such an institution as the present: an institution founded on an unequivocal acknowledgment and approval of that principle, which I have noticed; as necessary to pervade every system of Christian education; namely, a diligent inforcing of the precepts, the doctrines, and the ordinances, which are the peculiar marks of Christianity: for it is impossible that instruction can be conveyed, as by the provisions of this institution it is conveyed, according to the doctrine and discipline of the national Church, and in the catechism, not to mention the liturgy, of our Church, without exhibiting, in clear and palpable colours to the mind of the scholar, all those characteristick features that distinguish the religion of Christ, as a rule both of faith and of practice, from all other religious systems, which have at any time been preached to mankind. And therefore it is that we cherish, with the most settled and earnest attachment, a true Church of England education, convinced, with the most rooted persuasion, that in proportion as such education is encouraged and promoted, or discountenanced and checked, amongst all the several orders of the community, precisely in that proportion the apostolical and evangelical purity of our holy religion will be preserved or corrupted in this land.

I know not that I can more faithfully discharge the trust, committed to me upon the present oc-

casion, or more effectually recommend this and its kindred institutions to your unwearied protection and support, than by pursuing the course of observation, on which I have already entered ; by representing to you in detail the conformity of a Church of England education with the purity of the Christian dispensation ; and thus endeavouring to establish substantial reasons for recommending among the friends of the national religion, not an indiscriminate patronage of every mode of instruction, but a zealous and consistent encouragement of that which the Church has provided for her children. The criterion, with reference to which I propose to conduct the inquiry, is the declaration of our blessed Saviour in the text, that “He is the way, the truth, and the life.”

I. And first, our blessed Saviour is “the way” to guide us in the performance of our practical duty : for although the expression may be understood, and I apprehend not improperly understood, in a more enlarged signification, I apprehend also there can be no objection to understanding it in a sense, which it often bears in Scripture, as the rule of our life and conversation : as that “in which we are to walk all the days of our life.”

Now for this rule the Church of England evidently prescribes the distinguishing *precepts* of the Gospel. Taking, if I may so express myself, for

her text-book the Ten Commandments, which God first delivered for the regulation of the moral conduct of the Israelites, but on which Christ conferred the sanction of his confirmation, and thus rendered them equally obligatory upon Christians, she instils them into the minds of her children in their true, comprehensive, evangelical signification. In her summary of these commandments she adopts the principle of interpretation, established by her Divine Founder in his Sermon on the Mount ; adhering to the letter of the commandment, she at the same time inculcates it in its spirit ; in the prohibition of a sin, she perceives the injunction of the opposite duty ; and in the injunction of a duty, she perceives the prohibition of the opposite sin : the prohibition of a high degree of evil she considers as equivalent to the prohibition of every thing faulty of the same kind, though in a lower degree ; and where one instance of virtuous behaviour is commanded, she understands that every other of the same nature is commanded too. Thus, in her sense of what is to be learned from the decalogue, the four former precepts include the whole of our “duty towards God,” and the six latter the whole of our “duty towards our neighbour.” “Honour” to the natural parent implies in her apprehension obedience and submission to every civil or spiritual superior ; the forbidding of “adultery,” and of “theft,” she

considers equivalent to the command of “temperance, soberness, and chastity;” of positive, as well as negative, justice: the forbidding of “murder” comprehends, according to her exposition, every thing “hurtful” in the actions, every degree of “malice and hatred” in the heart: to abstain from “coveting” the property of others is extended by her to conscientious diligence for our own maintenance, and to the performance of our “duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call us.” In a word, the duties prescribed towards our neighbour are explained by her as commanding that we “do to all men as we would they should do unto us;” and the duties towards our Creator, as carrying with them the perpetual and universal obligation of “serving Him truly all the days of our life.”

Thus entirely are the practical instructions of our Church conceived in the spirit of the comprehensive precepts of our Saviour. But it is not merely the substance of the precepts themselves, which distinguishes the Gospel as a code of moral instruction: it is the *principle* of obedience, which the Gospel suggests to its professors, the *motive* of action, which it requires to be implanted in their hearts. It teaches us to “*love God, with all the heart, and with all the mind, and with all the soul, and with all the strength,*” as the first and great commandment; and as the second, “*to love our*

neighbour as ourselves :" it teaches us : that our love of God should originate in our sense of his bounty towards us, manifested especially in the great work of our redemption ; and that our love of man should be actuated, as by other considerations, so most signally and especially by our love of God.

Further, together with the principle of obedience, the Gospel supplies us with the *power of obeying* : for, whilst it cooperates with our own experience in affirming our natural inability to keep the commandments of God, it instructs us from whom, and by what means, the ability of keeping them is to be procured. "Without me," saith Christ to his disciples, "ye can do nothing<sup>1</sup>." "I can do all things," exclaims the Apostle, "through Christ which strengtheneth me<sup>2</sup>." "My grace," saith the Saviour again, "is sufficient for thee : my strength is made perfect in weakness<sup>3</sup>." "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full<sup>4</sup>."

Now upon these several points again, connected with our practical duties, what can be more at harmony with the Gospel than the language of our Church Catechism ? Do you require the true

<sup>1</sup> John xv. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iv. 13.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 9.

<sup>4</sup> John xvi. 24.

scriptural *principle* of obedience, the true evangelical *motives* of action? Read them in the professions, which she teaches to her children, “My duty towards God is to *love* him with all my heart: my duty towards my neighbour is to *love* him as myself.” Do you require the *foundation*, from whence this love is to originate? Perceive it not obscurely defined in the avowal which she teaches them of the privileges conferred upon them at their baptism, “wherein they were made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven:” and in the expression of their “hearty thanks to their heavenly Father, that he hath called them to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” Do you look for an acknowledgment of the *weakness* of human nature, of the *efficacy* of the Divine grace, and of the *means* whereby that grace is to be procured? Attend to her solemn assurance to every catechumen “Know this, that thou art not able to do these things of thyself, nor to walk in the commandments of God, and to serve Him without his special grace, which thou must learn at all times to call for by diligent prayer:” to the fidelity, with which she instructs all her children both in the letter and in the spirit of the Lord’s Prayer; and to the confidence, which she teaches them to express that God will grant their petitions “of his mercy and goodness, through our Lord Jesus

Christ." So anxious is the Church to instil into her children the distinguishing precepts of Christianity, in all their comprehensive bearings ; resting the performance of them withal upon its due foundation, and applying them to the magnifying of the Divine grace in Christ Jesus : so faithful does she shew herself, as to this particular branch of her instruction, in deriving her lessons from the proper source, and continually looking up to him who is "the way."

II. Nor is she less faithful in introducing her youthful members to the distinguishing *doctrines* of the Gospel, and training up their minds according to the communications of Him who is "the truth."

A more pestilential error cannot be conceived than the opinion, which accounts Christianity to be no more than a rule of practice, and renounces or neglects it as a rule of faith : which, whilst it loudly avows its approbation of the pure morality that the Gospel inculcates, rejects or despises the sublime truths that it reveals. "Without faith it is impossible to please God ; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them, that diligently seek him."<sup>1</sup> Neither is it a faith in God, resulting from a con-

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 6.

temptation of his works only, but a faith established upon a study of his revealed word, that is well-pleasing in his sight : a faith in God, not only as our Creator, but as our Redeemer and our Sanctifier ; in “God, who was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself<sup>1</sup>. ” “Ye believe in God,” saith Christ Himself, “believe also in me<sup>2</sup> :” in Me, by whom alone any man can come unto the Father. “If ye know me, ye know my Father also :” “believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me<sup>3</sup>. ” In a word, to “repent” and to “believe the Gospel,” as they were the original terms in which the Saviour began to preach his good tidings to mankind, so have they ever been, and ever will be, the joint conditions, to intitle us, through God’s mercy in Jesus Christ, to enter into the kingdom of heaven, the joint qualifications to prepare us for entering in. And if it be, as unquestionably it is, one peculiar praise of Christianity, to have elevated the tone of moral virtue, to have strengthened its sanctions, to have enlarged its views, and purified its spirit, still more peculiar to our holy religion is the excellence and the glory, to have disclosed to us those most concerning revelations, which relate to the nature of God and our own salvation ; to have taught us by the eye of faith to “see him who is invisible<sup>4</sup>;”

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19.

<sup>3</sup> John xiv. 2.

<sup>2</sup> John xiv. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. xi. 27.

and to have assured us of the only avenue to that “city which hath foundations,” the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of peace and holiness, “whose builder and maker is God<sup>1.</sup>”

It were vain to attempt, on this occasion, a detailed enumeration of the Christian doctrines. Suffice it to observe, that there are two of paramount importance, that involve in them, consequentially, all the truth which Christ came into the world to reveal and attest to mankind. One of these declares the existence of the Three Persons in the Divine Essence: the other, the co-operation of the Holy Three in the œconomy of grace, undertaken for the salvation of lost mankind, specially by the second Person in the blessed Trinity, “God manifest in the flesh<sup>2.</sup>” Of these the most important and most interesting, the very essential and constituent doctrines of the Gospel, the Church sedulously provides that her children be duly informed. She draws them out from among the numerous declarations of Scripture, with the particularity which she justly esteems due to their paramount importance: she places them fully, distinctly, and prominently before the eyes of her catechumens: she teaches the youthful disciple that it is the sum and substance of his faith to “believe in God the Father, who hath made him and all the world; in

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 10.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 10,

God the Son, who hath redeemed him and all mankind ; in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth him, and all the elect people of God." She perpetually reminds him of the great article of redemption by the blood of a crucified Saviour, and exhibits to him the death of Christ, under its various forms, as a " sacrifice" for sin ; as the procurer of other " benefits" from the mercy and goodness of God, and particularly of God's " special grace;" as a motive to thankfulness, an incentive to repentance and newness of life, and the solid foundation of charity and a lively faith. Thus does she approve herself to her Divine Master as ' a faithful minister and steward of the mysteries of God ;' not coldly alleging them as insulated, independent, unconnected facts, but blending and incorporating them with the whole system of her instructions : and thus, whilst, by inculcating the Christian *precepts*, she appears as the guide to holiness, by her attention to the Christian *doctrines* she asserts her claim to be regarded as " the pillar and ground of the truth<sup>1</sup>."

III. Thirdly, we are to consider the elementary instruction of the Church, as corresponding with the declarations of Him who is the " life."

Now the purpose, for which our blessed Saviour

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 1.

came down from heaven, was, that He might offer Himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and that through his death we might have life in the everlasting mansions of his Father. As conditions to entitle us through his mercy to this high privilege, and as qualifications to fit us for enjoying it, He commands us to believe in and to obey Him. But neither faith nor obedience are we in our natural state capable of rendering as we ought, encompassed as we are with infirmity, the slaves of passion, and laden with sin. To remedy these defects of our nature Christ further most graciously promises the aid of his Holy Spirit, that we, who are naturally "dead in trespasses and sins," may be "quickened<sup>1</sup>," and so empowered to perform those "good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them<sup>2</sup>"; and that "the eyes of our understanding," which are naturally blind and darkened, may be "enlightened"<sup>3</sup> to discern the truth, and our "hearts," which are naturally closed, may be "opened" to receive and embrace it<sup>4</sup>. Almighty God, we know, might, if such were his pleasure, confer these gifts without the intervention of any outward instrument: still, in this, and in the other ordinary dispensations of his Providence, He has chosen to

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. ii. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. i. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Acts xvi. 14.

work by means. Together, therefore, with the hope of future glory, He vouchsafes to instruct us in the means of present grace. He promises his blessing to a diligent attendance upon the study and preaching of his word: He assures us that He will hear and grant the fervent and constant prayer: but especially, and as the distinguishing *ordinances* of his religion, He has instituted the holy sacraments, to be the appointed vehicles of his favour and benediction, and the instruments, whereby the principle of spiritual life is to be implanted, perpetuated, and strengthened in our hearts. Would we be delivered from our natural state of sinfulness and alienation from God? Christ hath mercifully provided for us "the laver of regeneration<sup>1</sup>," whereby we may be "born again of water and the Holy Spirit, and received into Christ's holy Church, and be made lively members of the same<sup>2</sup>." Would we continue and grow up in God's favour and service? Christ hath graciously instituted the holy communion of his body and blood, that by spiritually eating his flesh and drinking his blood, we may "dwell in Christ, and Christ in us," that so we may continually "have life in us" in this world, and hereafter be "raised up by him at the last day<sup>3</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> Tit. iii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> John iii. 5. *Ministration of Baptism.*

<sup>3</sup> John vi. 54, 56.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon the attention which the Church bestows upon these distinguishing institutions of Christianity. Every person, who is acquainted with her catechism, must be well aware, how distinctly she explains the two sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper to be "outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace :" how unequivocally she affirms the spiritual grace of Baptism to be "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness ;" and that of the Lord's Supper to be "the body and blood of Christ, which are received by the faithful to the strengthening and refreshing of their souls :" how explicitly she asserts "the general necessity of these sacraments to salvation :" but, at the same time, with what prudent caution she guards against any perverse abuse of this true scriptural doctrine in such as might be disposed to rest contented with a formal administration of the sacraments, by inculcating the necessity of their being received with "true repentance for former sins," accompanied by "steadfast purposes of amendment of life ; with a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, and a thankful remembrance of his death ; and with charity for all mankind."

On these particulars, I say, it is unnecessary to insist at length: only let it be carefully observed, that as our blessed Lord, who gave commission to his Apostles to preach the Gospel,

empowered them also to admit disciples to the profession of it by baptism, and to administer to those who should be so admitted the symbols of his body and blood; the Church likewise, in imitation of her Divine Founder, refers her members to the representatives of the Apostles, her own true and legitimate priesthood, as the organs through whom Christ's spiritual blessings are to be conveyed. By their hands she requires her children to be washed in the laver of regeneration: and at their hands she instructs them, when they shall have come to years of discretion, to receive the cup of salvation and the bread of life. In the mean time she is anxious to maintain unbroken the pastoral connexion between her ministers and their youthful flocks: and, whilst she lays her solemn injunction on the former to be diligent in their catechetical instructions, she carefully instructs the latter to submit themselves to their "spiritual pastors," and "obediently to hear," "to be instructed and examined by," their duly-authorised minister.

Thus does the Church instruct, encourage, and prepare her children to receive the appointed means and pledges of present grace and future salvation. And thus finally, by endeavouring to impress upon every youthful member of her communion the precepts, the doctrines, and the ordinances, which peculiarly distinguish Christianity, she manifests in

each particular the conformity of her system of education with the purity of the Christian religion: She maintains her character as an instructor of youth "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," no less honourably than as a guide to those of riper age; and she gives unquestionable evidence of her fidelity to Him, to whose word she is obedient "as the Author and Finisher of her faith<sup>1</sup>," whilst she reposes on his merits as the only "propitiation for her sins<sup>2</sup>," and the "one Mediator between God and men<sup>3</sup>"; Him, whom she reverences as her "head," no less than she adores Him as her "Saviour<sup>4</sup>"; Him, to whom alone she is devoted, as "the way, the truth, and the life."

It is upon the principle of religious education, which has now been passing under review, that the institution, at this time soliciting your continued patronage, recommends itself to your support. It has indeed numerous and powerful claims upon your bounty; on account both of the many temporal evils which it contributes to prevent or remedy, and the many temporal blessings, which it bestows upon the children under its protection: the evils, on the one hand, of ignorance and licen-

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John ii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. v. 23.

tiousness ; of cold and nakedness ; of idleness, beggary, and vice. On the other hand, the blessings of useful learning and salutary discipline ; of decent and comfortable clothing ; and of habits of industry, diligence, and moral virtue. Add to these, the provision which it supplies for the further instruction and support of the objects of its attention on their removal from the more immediate shelter of its hospitable care. But great as these benefits are, and they are unquestionably and incalculably great, they derive their strongest recommendation from their connection with the religious advantages, provided for these poor children. The character of these advantages, as defined in the rules and practices of the Institution, I have made it my present business to endeavour to place before you. In the spirit of the established Church, whose doctrine and discipline it professes, and in whose steps it has faithfully trodden for more than a hundred years, this Institution makes no pretension to modern liberality, falsely so called ; it seeks not to detach the duties which we owe to our neighbour from those which we owe to God ; it admits not of an indifference to peculiar modes of faith, or to peculiar forms of religious worship ; it countenances no adulterated, no mutilated Christianity : but maintaining the indissoluble connection between the practice of Christian morality, and an attachment to the

Christian faith ; and esteeming imperfect every form of worship, which is not accompanied with the observance of the Christian sacraments, and conducted by the ministration of an apostolical priesthood, it carefully imbues the minds of its youthful disciples with the principles of our Church's venerable Liturgy, and trains and habituates them to devotion within these hallowed walls.

With such claims upon your beneficence, as believers in the Gospel according to the pure profession of the national Church, this charitable Institution, agreeably to annual custom, now again presents itself to your notice. It addresses its appeal, not so much to your feelings, as to your judgment. It rests its hopes of support, not on the equivocal dictates of a vague compassion, but on your deliberate conviction of what is right. In proportion as you value the spiritual blessings, which yourselves enjoy, and as you are persuaded that the instruction here furnished is agreeable to the Gospel of Him, who is "the way, the truth, and the life," we rely upon your co-operation in ensuring those blessings, in perpetuating that instruction, to the poor children of your vicinity. Such an exercise of benevolence is most especially a Christian's duty, for it is most especially conducive to the glory of God, and to the welfare of our fellow-creatures : and I need hardly remind

you, that benevolence, animated by Christian motives and directed to Christian ends, shall in no wise go unrewarded; here by the testimony of an approving conscience; hereafter by the benediction of our blessed Redeemer, and a brighter inheritance in His Father's house.

O Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life; Grant us perfectly to know thy Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life; that following the steps of thy holy Apostles, St. Philip and St. James, we may steadfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life, through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Collect for St. Philip and St. James's day.

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NOTE.—The foregoing Sermon was first preached for the benefit of an old parochial School in St. Margaret's, Westminster, the 1st of May, 1814, being the festival of St. Philip and St. James. The Author's habit of preaching, when he conveniently could, from the service of the day, caused him to have recourse to the Gospel for a subject, which appeared particularly appropriate to the occasion of his Discourse.

## **DISCOURSE XII.**

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### **THE CHURCH'S RITE OF CONFIRMATION, ITS HISTORY AND VALUE.**

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*Address to Candidates for Confirmation.*

**MY YOUNG CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,**

BEFORE we proceed with the solemn rite, for the administration of which we are at this time assembled, it appears to me desirable that a few words should be addressed to you upon the subject of our meeting. Your parochial ministers have doubtless already fixed it upon your attention, and pointed out the principal sources from which you may derive useful information and wholesome admonition, especially the office of Baptism in our Common Prayer Book; the Catechism, which was composed for your instruction on the occasion; and the Order of Confirmation itself. It is not from any apprehension that these

sources of a fit preparation have been previously neglected, nor is it in any degree with the purpose or hope of bringing before you any thing new or curious, that I now address you ; but because I am desirous, with the Divine blessing, of giving additional efficacy to your ministers' previous exertions, and to your own inquiries and meditations, by such a call upon your attention, now that you are on the point of confirming your baptismal vow in the face of this congregation, and in the house and the more immediate presence of Almighty God. May He, for the sake of His beloved Son, and by the grace of his Holy Spirit, give his blessing to what shall be delivered, and sanctify it especially to you who hear it, for your more devout participation in the ensuing office, and for your future edification and improvement in the knowledge and practice of his holy will !

The rite of Confirmation is not, like the sacrament of Baptism, ordained by Christ Himself, as a means and a pledge of the Divine grace, and as generally necessary to salvation : but it is to be valued as having had its origin in the practice of the primitive Church of Christ, framed after the example of the Apostles themselves ; as having been constantly maintained in succeeding ages ; as calculated to call down upon those, who duly engage in it, a blessing from Almighty God ; and as a probable instrument, in several different re-

spects, for contributing to their advancement in Christian faith and obedience.

I. Confirmation, I observe, is to be valued, as having had its origin in the practice of the primitive Church, such practice having been framed on the example of the Apostles themselves.

In the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we are informed, that Philip, of whom we read in the sixth chapter as having been ordained a "deacon," or inferior minister in the Church, "went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." . . . . "And when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." "Now when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus:) then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

From this narrative you will have seen, that another rite consequent upon Baptism, and con-

sisting of “prayer,” with “the laying on of hands,” was administered on this occasion, which took place in the primitive and Apostolical age of the Church, to persons previously baptized: the rite being the same as that which became afterwards to be described by the name of Confirmation.

You will also have seen, that this rite of Confirmation was performed by the highest order of ministers in the Church. Philip had been duly ordained to the work of the ministry, as a “deacon:” he was “an Evangelist,” or preacher of the Gospel: he was invested with the power even of working miracles; and he had authority to “baptize.” The power of confirming, however, appears not to have been committed to him. The Apostles sent two of their own number for that purpose: and it was by the “laying on of their hands,” that the Holy Ghost was received by the baptized.

From this narrative it may likewise be represented to you as probable, that, considering the manner in which the occurrence is related, this was not the first instance of Confirmation being administered. There is no trace of any introductory deliberation or decree of the holy Apostles, as in a case entirely new might perhaps have been expected: but they appear to have sent Peter and John as a matter of course, and in compliance with a custom already established<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> I think that I am indebted for this remark to a little vo-

But the custom, whenever established, was afterwards continued. Accordingly another instance of Confirmation occurs in the nineteenth chapter of the Acts, where we read, that when certain of the Ephesians had heard the preaching of Paul, "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them." The "laying on of hands," you may here again see, was, as before noticed, different from, and subsequent to, the baptism; and the person who laid on his hands was here again an Apostle: but whereas the Apostles, named upon the former occasion, were St. Peter and St. John, acting in pursuance of their mission from the Apostles in general, "which were at Jerusalem," the Apostle, who is here recorded to have administered this rite, was St. Paul: whence you may be led to infer the general agreement in the apostolical body concerning the rite of Confirmation, and the general prevalence of it in the first age of the Church.

And answerable to this practice appears to have

lume of "Lectures on the Offices of the Church," (simple, sound, and edifying, as are all the parochial addresses of the same Author) by my excellent friend, Archdeacon Berens. It does not occur to my recollection that I have met with it elsewhere, yet, when mentioned, it appears so obvious, and is so just, that I feel surprised at its uncommonness, not to say, its originality.

been the elementary religious instruction in that early age. For in the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews the same Apostle, among "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," among those things which he describes as the "foundation" of Christian instruction, makes special mention of "the doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands:" by the latter expression being generally understood to mean the rite of Confirmation, as an established and acknowledged usage of the Church, and connecting it immediately with baptism in his thoughts and language, as we have in the foregoing passages seen it connected in practice.

II. The practice of laying on hands by the Apostles upon persons previously baptized, or, in other words, the rite of Confirmation, having been thus established by the Apostles, acting under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, and so continued through the primitive age, was in the following ages of the Church adopted by those, whom the Apostles appointed to succeed them in its government, and so on in uninterrupted order by their successors. These facts are made known to us by the evidence of Christian writers, who lived soon after the Apostles' times; and who had the best means of being acquainted with the institutions of the Apostles, and with the consequent usages of

the Church : and by these writers we are informed, that the sacrament of baptism was followed by the rite of Confirmation ; that this rite was considered to be the same as that which had been used by the Apostles in the case of the Samaritan converts ; that the persons who administered the rite were the Bishops, the governors of the Church ; and that the authority of Scripture in this particular was supported by the consent of the Church throughout the world.

It is upon the ground of such examples as have been now recited, the examples, namely, first of the Apostles themselves, and then of the earliest succeeding ages of the Church, that our apostolical branch of the universal Church has adopted the rite of Confirmation ; has made it a part of her religious discipline, has provided an order for the proper administration of it, and has enjoined upon all persons baptized by her ministers, that so soon as they shall be “come to a competent age,” and have been sufficiently instructed in their religion, they “be brought to the Bishop to be confirmed by him :” for as in the time of the Apostles Confirmation was ministered, not by any lower orders of the ministry, but only by the Apostles themselves ; and as in the times succeeding that of the Apostles it was ministered by the Bishops, their successors ; so it is ordered by our Church to be ministered only by those of the episcopal order,

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**the legitimate successors of the Apostles in the government of the Church.**

**III.** The rite of Confirmation then is valued by us on account of its venerable origin, and its ancient and perpetual observance in the Church of Christ. It is valued also, as calculated to call down upon those, who duly receive it, a blessing from Almighty God.

It is true indeed that in the instances of Confirmation recorded in the New Testament, “the laying on of the hands” of the Apostles was accompanied by miraculous powers and gifts of the Holy Ghost, similar to those which the Apostles themselves received on the day of Pentecost. These gifts, which were necessary for propagating and establishing the Christian faith in those infant days of the Church, have long since ceased; and to them therefore we make no pretensions. But, whilst the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost have been in succeeding times withheld, his ordinary gifts, which are at all times necessary for the sanctification of the Church and its members, are promised to be bestowed at all times on those who seek them after the manner of God’s appointment. God has promised by his beloved Son that He will, at all times, “give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him.”

Together then with the extraordinary miracu-

lous gifts, originally bestowed for the benefit of the Church at large by Confirmation, we presume that his ordinary sanctifying graces were likewise given for the benefit of those who were confirmed. It was for the sake of this latter benefit that the whole Christian world kept up the custom of confirming the baptized by the subsequent "laying on of hands :" for, as the contemporary Christian writers inform us, "though the speaking with tongues, and the working of miracles" were allowed "not to attend the laying on of hands, as in the days of the Apostles, they expected, by means of this solemn rite, that "the soul might be enlightened by the Spirit of God," the influence of the Spirit on those, who received Him, being shown by "the love which they bore to their brethren, and by their desire of the peace and unity of the Church of Christ." It is for the sake of this same benefit, that the Church in the present time maintains the same solemn rite, to the spiritual edification of such as receive it. And surely when we see a number of young Christians, as on this occasion, assembled together in observance of an institution established by the Apostles of their Lord Jesus Christ :—when we hear them, "in the presence of God and of the congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in their name at their baptism;" profess that their "help is in the name of the Lord ;" and call upon Him to "hear

their prayers, and to let their cry come unto Him :" —when we hear the appointed minister of the Church commemorate the former mercy of Almighty God, in having "vouchsafed to regenerate these his servants by water and the Holy Ghost," and in having "given unto them forgiveness of all their sins;" and add thereunto a humble prayer, that He will "strengthen them with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and daily increase in them his manifold gifts of grace :" —when we see him, "after the example of Christ's holy Apostles," "lay his hands upon the head of all them in order kneeling before him," and hear him accompany the action with a prayer for each, that the Lord will "defend these his children or servants," so made by baptism, and so confirmed by the ratification of the baptismal vow, "with his heavenly grace, that they may continue his for ever, and daily increase in his Holy Spirit more and more, until they come unto God's everlasting kingdom :" —when we hear the same accredited minister of Christ and of his Church, "having now laid his hands upon these servants of God, to certify them, by this sign, of God's favour and gracious goodness towards them," add withal the humble supplications of the congregation to Almighty God in their behalf, that "his fatherly hand may be ever over them ; that his holy Spirit may be ever with them ; and that He will so lead them in the knowledge

and obedience of his word, that in the end they may obtain everlasting life, through our Lord Jesus Christ :”—Surely, I say, when we hear and see these, and all the other particulars of this Apostolical rite of Confirmation, as ministered according to the beautiful order appointed by the Church, we may reasonably cherish the well-founded hope and belief, that the ministration is accompanied by the blessing of Almighty God on all those who come duly prepared to receive it, and who receive it with faithful, obedient, devout, and humble hearts: for let it ever be borne by you in mind, my young Christian friends, that they, who would enjoy God’s blessing upon their prayers, must put up their prayers, and seek his blessing, with sincerity and fervency,” in spirit and in truth.”

**IV. But we moreover value Confirmation, as a probable instrument for contributing to the advancement of the Confirmed in Christian faith and obedience.**

1. This it is in the first place by reason of the preparatory training which they are required to undergo. The Church, you know, has provided a Catechism, as a special “instruction to be learned of every person before he be brought to be confirmed by the Bishop.” In this Catechism she directs every parochial minister to be “diligent

in instructing and examining the children of his parish," in order to their Confirmation. And "to the end that Confirmation may be ministered to the more edifying of such as shall receive it, she hath thought good to order that none shall be confirmed, but such as can answer to the questions which in the Catechism are contained;" a qualification, of which I presume, that all of you have been found by your ministers to be possessed.

Now the Church Catechism is an excellent summary of Christian faith and practice: its instructions are most valuable with respect to the covenant of salvation in Jesus Christ, the privileges of Baptism, the obligations of the baptismal vow, the articles of our belief, the commandments of God and our corresponding duty, the necessity and the objects of prayer, and the nature, the benefits, and the requisites of the Christian sacraments: so that the person, who shall have been duly instructed in it, cannot be deficient either in the soundest principles of religious learning, or in the most animating motives to a godly and a Christian life. That a particular period should be appointed, at which all her youthful members may be possessed of this instruction, is a most useful provision of the Church. The provision, if properly executed by her ministers, whose duty it is to present no persons to be confirmed unless they "think them fit to be presented," secures

the effectual doing of that, which might otherwise in many cases be done imperfectly, or be left undone. Thus it is extremely probable, that amongst you who are presented here this day, as amongst any other assembly of young persons at any time presented to the Bishop, as having been “examined and approved for Confirmation” by their respective ministers, many would not have undergone such an examination, nor been proved deserving of such approbation, but for such an occasion. And therefore we particularly value Confirmation, as fixing a season, at which the Church may ascertain by her ministers, that her children, who have been “received into the congregation of Christ’s flock” in their infancy, have subsequently been taught their Christian engagements, and learned “all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul’s health.”

2. Further, we value Confirmation as a means of religious improvement, because of the serious and solemn character of the rite itself, when the confirmed, “in the presence of God and of the congregation,” renew their baptismal vow, and pledge their allegiance to God through his appointed minister, and receive the assurance of God’s favour by the laying on of the hands of the Bishop, and unite with him and with their brethren in humble supplications for their own immediate personal good. For together with such

supplications and prayers to Almighty God as form in general the devout exercises of the Church, the Order of Confirmation contains, as I trust all of you are well aware, a distinct question and answer, the former proposed by the Bishop, and the latter returned by each individual that is to be confirmed; and a distinct action of the Bishop upon each individual, by "the laying of his hand upon the head of every one severally," with a distinct prayer for the "defence of God's heavenly grace, and for the increase of his holy Spirit," in his or her behalf. Thus the rite itself by its seriousness and solemnity, and specially by this personal appeal to the mind and heart of every one that partakes in it, is under the Divine blessing calculated to impress them at the time with an awful and affecting sense of their religious duty, and to encourage their good resolutions: and such an impression, my young Christian friends, I trust that it will now have upon you.

3. Moreover, we value Confirmation as a means of religious improvement, because of the effect, which the recollection of the engagements, then formed and contracted by those who partake in it, is calculated to produce. Upon this occasion, the persons, presented to the Bishop, "ratify and confirm the baptismal promise and vow in their own persons, and acknowledge themselves bound to believe, and to do, all those things which their

godfathers and godmothers then undertook for them." Such is the promise and acknowledgement, which you for instance will presently be called upon to make. In the progress of your lives afterwards, you will certainly be often tempted to violate this engagement. You will be enticed to sin by evil spirits, by evil men, and by your own evil passions and appetites: the principles of your Christian faith will be assailed: attacks will be made on your resolutions of Christian obedience. The solemnity of your Confirmation should then be revived in your minds, and may be made the subject of such meditations as these:

"On such a day, in the presence of God and of a large congregation, 'I renewed the solemn promise and vow that was made in my name at my baptism: shall I now give way to temptation, and abandon that solemn promise and vow? On that day, 'I ratified and confirmed the same in my own person, and acknowledged myself bound to believe, and to do, all that my godfathers and godmothers had formerly undertaken for me.' Shall I now annul what I then ratified and confirmed, and hold myself released from obligations, by which I then acknowledged myself to be bound? On that day 'I renounced the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh:' shall I now give myself up to those temptations of my spiritual

enemy, to those unlawful pleasures, profits, and honours of the world, to those immoral gratifications of the flesh, which I then promised that I would ‘not follow, nor be led by them?’ I then declared, that ‘I steadfastly believed all the Articles of the Christian faith:’ shall I now suffer myself to be withdrawn from that holy faith, and to relinquish my trust in Him who is of infinite truth, and cannot lie; of infinite love, and will not deceive me? I then resolved and promised, that I would ‘obediently keep God’s holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life.’ Shall I now break that resolution and falsify that promise, and, instead of ‘continuing his faithful soldier and servant unto my life’s end,’ and thus securing his favour and my own happiness, shall I rank myself among his enemies, and bring down upon me his displeasure, and make myself miserable for ever? God forbid! Nay, rather let me never forget, nor be unfaithful to, my Christian engagements! Let me never be ‘ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner,’ ‘to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him!’ Let me ‘continually mortify all my evil and corrupt affections!’ Let me ‘daily proceed in all virtue, and godliness of living!’ To act thus is the profession, which is represented unto us by our Baptism, and which was at that

time undertaken for me by my sureties:—to act thus is the profession, which I took upon myself in my own person at my Confirmation. May God give me grace to adhere constantly to that profession, and to endeavour faithfully to observe the solemn promise and vow, made at first in my name, and by myself afterwards ratified and confirmed!"

It is thus, my young Christian friends, it is by such recollections and meditations as these, that the rite of Confirmation may be rendered instrumental by God's grace to the religious benefit, in after times, of those who are confirmed: so that the solemn ceremony, in which you are this day about to take part, may become an occasion of good to you on every future day of your life, by reminding you and prompting you to the discharge of your Christian duties. There is one duty, however, in particular, to which I would in conclusion draw your attention, as being immediately connected with this ceremony: for as Confirmation is the renewing and ratification of the promise made in your name at the ministration of the sacrament of Baptism, so is it your introduction to the other sacrament of the holy Communion of the Lord's Supper, to which the Church considers you not qualified to be "admitted, until such time as you be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed." But that qualification having been now obtained, I trust that under the con-

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tinual guidance and exhortation of your ministers you will soon become partakers of the holy Communion, in which the Church now calls upon you to partake, being, as it is, one of our blessed Lord's appointed means of grace, and one of those commandments, which you are about to promise that you will keep and will walk in all the days of your life.

Take good heed, I pray you, to the word that has been now spoken ; and God Almighty give you his blessing for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen !

## DISCOURSE XIII.

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### THE CHURCH'S JUDGMENTS ON RECEIVING THE HOLY COMMUNION.

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MATT. xxii. 5.

But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandize.

INDIFFERENCE to the publick duties of religion is an evil, of which the ministers of religion have frequent reason to complain. This indifference betrays itself in a variety of ways. Some persons absent themselves altogether from the services of the Church. Others attend them but occasionally, and after long periods of interruption. Others are contented to be present during a portion of the service, irreverently breaking in on the devotions of the congregation, and caring little, provided they can be present during the delivery of the sermon. Others, the moment the sermon has been delivered, hasten impatiently and abruptly

away, regardless of the blessing which is to follow. Others again, although they may in body be present, are absent in spirit, having their thoughts occupied upon any other subject than that most important business for which they are professedly assembled. Of all these in their different degrees may be said, that which our blessed Saviour in the parable saith of the Jews, to whom was made the gracious offer of God's mercy in the Gospel, "they make light of it, and go their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandize."

But the subject, more especially in my thoughts at present, is that very deplorable neglect of the holy Communion, which prevails to a great extent in most of our congregations; indeed, in almost every congregation, the disproportion between the number that attends the general service, and that part of it which attends upon the celebration of the Lord's Supper, is most prominent and distressing. Whatever regard to their religious duty may have brought the large body of persons to the house of God, that regard appears to evaporate as soon as the sermon is concluded: and when that special act of Christian worship, which Christ Himself hath ordained in remembrance of Him and of his sufferings, and in acknowledgment of the blessings which He hath thereby purchased for us, and as a mean and pledge of his grace, is about to be celebrated, the great, the very great majority of

those, who have promised to “continue his faithful soldiers and servants unto their lives’ end,” habitually abandon their post. “They make light of” their Saviour’s love, “and go their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandize;” retiring at least to some other place than that to which their duty calls them, and their sense of gratitude as well as of duty ought to prompt them to come.

The business of the ministers of religion in cases such as these is obvious and imperative. Our judgment of the obligation, under which our congregations are held, is decided: our acquaintance with their neglect of that obligation cannot be dissembled: our duty is to endeavour to correct or diminish the evil, “that we may not be partakers of other men’s sins<sup>1</sup>. ” If the neglect, of which we have such reason to complain, proceeds from ignorance, we must endeavour to instruct you in your Christian obligations: if it proceed from thoughtlessness, we must endeavour to awaken and arouse your attention: if from lukewarmness, to animate and strengthen your devotion: in any case we must exert ourselves, by the blessing of God, to “bring you to a better mind;” that so, by conscientiously discharging our ministerial commission, and, if possible, by persuading you to

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. v. 22.

act as Christians ought, we may, through God's mercy, in Christ Jesus, "both save ourselves and those that hear us<sup>1</sup>."

The subject, upon which I am desirous of fixing your present attention, is, you are well aware, my brethren, by no means a novel one. From the time that I was first put in charge of your religious instruction, and observed the practice of our congregation with respect to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, it has been my object to press the duty of communicating emphatically upon your minds. Sometimes, therefore, I have insisted on the duty in discourses expressly and distinctly appropriated to the discussion: sometimes I have interwoven observations upon it incidentally with general statements of Christian obligation: thus inculcating "precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little<sup>2</sup>." Thus to recur to the same topick "to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe<sup>3</sup>."

In attributing, however, to the topick, upon which I now desire to fix your attention, the importance which I do attribute to it, I wish to guard you against the supposition, that I am act-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xxviii. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. iii. 1.

ing from any peculiar judgment of my own, rather than from the acknowledged sense and plain injunctions of the Church, of which I am a minister. If indeed your attention has been with any seriousness drawn to the liturgical provisions and to the ritual instructions of the Church in our Book of Common Prayer, you cannot be ignorant of her opinion concerning the communication of her members in the Lord's Supper, or of the importance which she attaches to their devout communication. In her Catechism, which she has composed for the instruction of the young in the principles of the Christian religion, she teaches her members that this sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as well as the other sacrament of Baptism, is "generally necessary to salvation," and she carefully informs them of the qualifications requisite for their due participation. After her office of Confirmation she pronounces, that "none shall be admitted to the holy Communion until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed :" evidently regarding their admission to this holy rite as a great Christian privilege, and intimating that, when they shall have been confirmed, they are to be admitted. She particularly recommends the receiving of the holy Communion to persons under circumstances of peculiar solemnity; namely, "at the first opportunity" after marriage, and after childbirth,

respectively: and she has provided a particular office for administering the Communion to the sick. But what is more immediately to our present purpose, she enjoins expressly, that "every parishioner shall communicate at the least three times in the year, of which Easter shall be one:" thus pointing to their duty, at Easter more especially, but not at Easter only, though it is to be feared that many persons, who do communicate at that festival, seldom or never think of communicating at any other time; and some rarely perhaps attend at any other time on the ordinary service of the Church, as if by one annual attendance on the Lord's table they laid in a sufficient provision of "spiritual food and sustenance" for the whole year: whereas in truth, if they are desirous of procuring "the strengthening and refreshing of their souls," which is the great benefit to be sought in that holy sacrament, they ought to have recourse to it as often as occasion serves. But not to dwell upon this point at present, and reverting to the several declarations, which the Church makes of her sentiments concerning the communication of her members in the Lord's Supper, I repeat, that it is her express injunction, that "every parishioner shall communicate, at the least, three times in the year, of which Easter shall be one:"— further, "to the intent that they may be always in a readiness to die whenever it shall please God

to call them," she directs her parochial ministers "diligently, from time to time, to exhort their parishioners to the often receiving of the holy Communion of the body and blood of our Saviour Christ, when it shall be publickly administered in the Church;"—in order to avoid such difficulties as might otherwise occur from ignorance or misapprehension, she directs her officiating minister, in one of the exhortations provided for giving notice of the purposed celebration, to invite those, who have any scruples about communicating, to apply to him or to some other clergyman "for spiritual comfort and counsel," that so their scruples may be removed:—and, finally, she has provided another exhortation, which she directs the minister to use, "in case he shall see the people negligent to come to the holy Communion," and which has accordingly been read to you this day; an exhortation, comprising within a short compass a most impressive expostulation upon the duty of communicating, upon the insufficiency of the ordinary pretexts for neglecting it, and upon the serious consequences to be apprehended from such neglect. All these provisions of the Church concur in proving, both the sense which she entertains of *your* duty, and the office, which results therefrom to *us*, her ministers, namely, that of earnestly pressing you to a conscientious performance of it. And I am sure that I need add no more to con-

vince you of the propriety of our diligently and repeatedly bringing the subject forward, and recommending it to your very serious thoughts.

I shall proceed upon this suggestion ; and, in further prosecution of the subject, shall enlarge upon the exhortation, which the Church has provided for the purpose of correcting the fault of those of her members, who are “ negligent to come to the holy Communion,” and which has been just read in obedience to her directions.

I. The exhortation begins with an invitation to the congregation, to attend the purposed celebration of the holy Communion on the day for which it is announced. “ Dearly beloved brethren, on Sunday next I intend, by God’s grace, to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, unto which in God’s behalf I bid you all that are here present ; and beseech you for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake that ye will not refuse to come thereto, being so lovingly called and bidden by God himself.” And certainly he who shall seriously consider the circumstances attending the institution of this sacrament, and the stupendous instance of God’s love in Christ Jesus of which it is a memorial, will feel himself strongly impelled under God’s grace to take that course, whereby he may testify his sense of the Divine goodness.

For it is a memorial of the infinite love of God to lost mankind in sending his Son our Lord Jesus Christ, to take our nature upon Him, and to die for our sins; and of “the innumerable benefits, which by his precious bloodshedding He hath obtained to us.” And to this memorial God is graciously pleased to invite us, as on the one hand to perpetuate the memory of the blessings already conferred, so on the other that we may receive fresh communications of his grace, of which the Sacrament is a token and pledge. So that whether we regard the subject with a view to the past or to the future, the Lord’s Supper is a special illustration of God’s love towards us, as manifested in the sending of his beloved Son: for whose sake, therefore, the Church directs us her ministers to “beseech you not to refuse to come.” And she directs us to beseech “you all that are here present,” because, it being the will of God that “all men should be saved<sup>1</sup>,” and his Son having died for all men, it is a privilege which belongs to all of you to partake of the appointed means of salvation, one of which is this holy sacrament, to which you are invited. No sort or description of human beings, no individual person of any sort or description, is excluded from the reach of God’s mercy in Christ: of course no one is excluded

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 4, 6.

from this the appointed avenue for the communication of his mercy. High and low, rich and poor, bond and free, all are “lovingly called and bidden by God Himself;” and all are accordingly invited and entreated to come by the Church, and by us the ministers of the Church, “in God’s behalf, and for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

II. The exhortation then proceeds to urge the invitation by an appeal to the generous feelings of those to whom it is addressed. “Ye know how grievous and unkind a thing it is, when a man hath prepared a rich feast, decked his table with all kinds of provisions, so that there lacketh nothing but the guests to sit down ; and yet they who are called most unthankfully refuse to come.” The common dictates of gratitude, you see, bid you attend to the invitation. The request of an ordinary human acquaintance, of a person with whom you are on an equality, would not be causelessly slighted and contemned, without some reflection on the character of him who should act with such unkindness in return. The Church exhorts you to put the question to yourself, and to examine it by an appeal to your own feelings. “Which of you in such a case would not be moved? Who would not think a great injury and wrong done unto him?” But if such be the sort of feeling, with which we should regard the

slight of a neighbour, what should be our feelings in a case, where the neglect is manifested, not to a frail, insignificant, human being like ourselves, but to the throne and majesty of heaven ?

Well then does the Church draw from her previous admonition this awful and alarming inference, “ Wherefore, most dearly beloved in Christ, take ye good heed, lest ye, withdrawing yourselves from this holy Supper, provoke God’s indignation against you.” An inference, indeed, of which we may well take heed, and be most carefully on our guard against so tremendous an evil : for what can be equally alarming with the indiguation of the Almighty ; what so resistless as infinite power armed for vengeance ; what so terrible as mercy slighted, and goodness abused ?

III. But perhaps it will be observed, that a man may have a sufficient reason for “ withdrawing himself from this holy sacrament.” The exhortation of the Church proceeds on the supposition, that “ they who are called do *without any cause* most unthankfully refuse to come.” And it may perhaps be contended, that, where a cause exists, the indignation of God, which the Church anticipates, is not in reality to be apprehended. Let me, however, here most seriously caution you against the probable delusion of such an apology as this. Let me caution you against rashly and

presumptuously attempting to excuse yourselves from doing what God appoints for you to do.

In the first place, is it the fact, that you have any sober excuse, any excuse at all beyond thoughtlessness concerning your spiritual condition, beyond indifference to God's commandments, beyond an habitual lukewarmness with respect to your religious duties in general, and to this duty in particular? From among the thousands and ten thousands of persons in our congregations, who quit the house of God without communicating, every time the holy Communion is administered; from among the many persons in this congregation, my brethren, who so quitted it the last time, and who probably will so quit it the next; how small is the number of those, who would be able, if singly interrogated, to give even a plausible reason for their neglect of God's commandment, and for their refusal to perform this their "bounden duty and service?"

IV. But secondly, let us attend to the remarks of the Church upon this point in the continuation of her exhortation, where she touches upon some of the excuses which are usually alleged for this neglect. "It is an easy matter for a man to say, I will not communicate, because I am otherwise hindered with worldly business. But such excuses are not so easily accepted and allowed be-

fore God." And how indeed is it to be expected that they should be? Worldly business *on the other six days* of the week, if that business be lawful in itself, and be lawfully followed, is no hindrance to a man's performance of his religious duties in general, and particularly of this, on the day of the Lord's rest. Worldly business *on this day* can be no proper or warrantable hindrance to his performance of such duties; for the day is blessed and hallowed for the service of the Lord: and to plead the occupations of the world as an excuse for not doing that which God hath commanded to be done, is to justify the omission of one duty under the plea of the violation of another, and so to excuse sin by sin. It is true that "worldly business," if unlawful in itself or unlawfully followed, is, not a warrantable indeed, but a sufficient hindrance to your receiving the holy Communion; but then it is a sufficient hindrance likewise to your due performance of your other religious duties, and must, unless it be repented of and forsaken, prove fatal to the everlasting welfare of your soul. And surely it is well worth your while, to set the profits of your "worldly business," which incapacitates you for the service of God, against the value of God's love, which you despise by neglecting his service; and to consider, "what a man will be profited who shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul;

and what a man shall give in exchange for his soul<sup>1</sup>."

V. But we pass on with the exhortation of the Church to another excuse. "If any man say, I am a grievous sinner, and therefore am afraid to come; wherefore then do ye not repent and amend?" The question is unanswerable: unanswerable, I mean, to any other effect, than that which the Church intends by proposing it. You plead your sins as an excuse for not coming to the Lord's Supper. And your sins, if wilfully committed, and obstinately persevered in, and impenitently cherished, are without doubt the most powerful reason you can plead. What shall we say to your excuse? What, but that if you are a wilful, an obstinate, an impenitent sinner, you are not fit "to come to that holy table." But are you then fit to join a Christian congregation, and to worship God in this place, with the daily prayers of the Church? Are you then fit to lift up your hands and voice before Him even in your domestick and private retirement? Are you then fit to serve Him with "the spirits of just men made perfect, in the general assembly and Church of the firstborn which are written in heaven<sup>2</sup>?"

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xii. 23.

To the hardened sinner we are prepared to allow all that he can reasonably contend for. He is “afraid to come” to the Lord’s Table; and well indeed may he be afraid. But then with the Church we retort upon him, and add in her ardent and impressive words, “Wherefore then do ye not repent and amend?” To the success of your prayers in the congregation, to the success of your family and more secret devotions, to the whole spiritual welfare and prosperity of your souls in this world, to the preservation and happiness of your being both soul and body in another, repentance and amendment are indispensable. “Repent and amend;” and you are fit through the inestimable merits of your Redeemer to serve God both in this world, and in another: to partake in this life of his holy Communion, to which He now so lovingly invites you; and after this life to have the fruition of his glorious Godhead for ever. “Ye, therefore, that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways: Draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort.”

If you will not repent, if you will not amend, if you will not resolve to lead a new life, following the commandments, and walking in the ways of

God; we acquiesce in the propriety of your abstinence from this holy Communion, and we warn you in the solemn language of the other exhortation of the Church, "If any of you be a blasphemer of God, an hinderer or slanderer of his word, an adulterer, or be in malice or envy, or any other grievous crime, repent you of your sins, or else come not to that holy table." But at the same time we hold ourselves bound to apprise you of the inevitable consequences; and to warn you, that they who "despise the riches of God's goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering," and do not permit themselves to be "led thereby to repentance, do after their hardness and impenitent hearts treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render unto every man according to his deeds<sup>1</sup>."

VI. But we pass on with the exhortation of the Church to other excuses. "When God calleth you, are ye not ashamed to say, ye will not come? When ye should return to God, will ye excuse yourselves, and say ye are not ready?" To those, who perversely set up their own inclinations, as an excuse for not doing what God commands, I know not well what is to be said. They must be

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ii. 4—6.

left to their own wilfulness ; not however without the solemn admonition that the time will come, when obstinate sinners, who have resisted the will of God to save them, will not be able to resist his will to punish ; and when He shall pronounce judgment upon them in that severe but righteous sentence, “ Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me ! ” .

To those, however, who seek to excuse themselves under the plea that “ they are not ready,” a more extended remonstrance may be addressed, in the hope of removing an erroneous notion under which they appear to labour as to the nature of the preparation that is required of them. The preparation requisite for those, who would come to the Lord’s Table, is stated by St. Paul to consist of self-examination : “ Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup <sup>2</sup>. ” The Church adopts the requisition, and adds the nature of the examination required. In her Catechism she teaches, that what is required of them who come to the Lord’s Supper, is to “ examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life ; ” whether they “ have a lively faith in God’s mercy through Christ, with a thank-

<sup>1</sup> Luke xix. 27.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 28.

ful remembrance of his death ;” and whether they “ be in charity with all men.” In one of her exhortations at the time of giving notice of the sacrament, she instructs you that “ the way and means” of becoming “ worthy partakers of that holy table,” is, “ first to examine your lives and conversations by the rule of God’s commandments ; and whereinsoever ye shall perceive yourselves to have offended, either by will, word, or deed, there to bewail your own sinfulness, and to confess yourselves to Almighty God, with full purpose of amendment of life. And if ye shall perceive your offences to be such, as are not only against God, but also against your neighbours, then ye shall reconcile yourselves unto them, being ready to make restitution and satisfaction, according to the uttermost of your powers, for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other ; and being likewise ready to forgive others that have offended you, as ye would have forgiveness of your offences at God’s hand.” And in her exhortation at the time of the celebration she calls upon us to the same effect, to “ consider how St. Paul exhorteth all persons diligently to try and examine themselves, before they presume to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup ;” and she accordingly exhorts the communicants in the language of the soundest discretion, and the most affectionate regard, “ Judge therefore yourselves, bre-

thren, that ye be not judged of the Lord: repent ye truly for your sins past; have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour; amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men; so shall ye be meet partakers of those holy mysteries."

This is the preparation, which Scripture, and the Church the authorised interpreter of Scripture, and the ministers of the Church in obedience to her authority, require you to make. Other preparation than this we require not; other preparation we conceive that no one has a right to require, at your hands. By such preparation you may be rendered worthy partakers of that holy table: you may be made "ready to return to God" in this way of his own appointment. But remember, that whether you partake or not, such preparation is necessary to be made, as you hope for any enjoyment of the blessings consequent on Christ's sacrifice, for the favour of God in this world, or for an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. To say then that you "are not ready" for the holy Communion, is to say that you are not ready for heaven. Whether this is a condition, with which you ought to sit down contented in passive indifference, is a question not unworthy your most serious consideration. "I speak as to wise men: judge ye what I say<sup>1</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. x. 15.

VII. Such being the nature of the pleas, most usually alleged for the neglect of this duty, the Church next proceeds to exhort you, to "consider earnestly with yourselves how little such feigned excuses will avail before God." And she illustrates the danger of those who allege them by applying to their condition the parable of the marriage feast. "They that refused the feast in the Gospel, because they had bought a farm, or would try their yokes of oxen, or because they were married, were not so excused, but counted unworthy of the heavenly feast."

This parable was originally designed by our blessed Saviour to represent the condition of those persons, to whom the Gospel was first preached, but who refused to receive and believe it. It is applicable to those at any time, who suffer their worldly business or pleasure to preclude attention to the gracious invitations of God, and who prefer the occupations and interests of this life to those of another. And in its particular application, it so precisely, and to the very letter, represents the case of those, who with a general indifference to their religious duties combine an habitual neglect of this special obligation, that it is scarcely possible to read and consider the parable, without being struck with the resemblance and forcibly drawn to the application. And certainly it well deserves your consideration, whether there is not alarming

reason to apprehend, that they who slight this ordinance of God, whereby He invites them to communicate with Him now, will hereafter be repulsed from his presence with that dreadful sentence of condemnation, “I tell you that none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper.”

This at least may be contended, and it is altogether agreeable to the general course of God’s dealings as explicitly set before us in his word, that whatever indulgence He may be pleased in his mercy to extend to persons of tender and scrupulous consciences, who are withheld from his table by an excessive timidity of spirit, and a profound sense of their own infirmities, and an awful apprehension of the majesty of God, no such indulgence can be reasonably expected by those, who think to shelter themselves under the plea of “feigned excuses:” who withdraw themselves from the Lord’s Supper on account of a fond attachment to the world, which they will not moderate; or of sinful habits, which they will not renounce; or of a defective preparation, which they will not improve; or of a perverse inclination, to which they choose to surrender themselves: and thus “make light” of God’s holy ordinance, “and go their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandize,” regardless of the mercy and grace of God which they are contemning, and of his severe

indignation which they are provoking against themselves.

VIII. The Church having thus noticed the excuses which are commonly alleged for the neglect of the Lord's Supper, and having condemned their weakness and insufficiency, recurs in the sequel of her exhortation to the reasons which render obligatory the observance of it, and points them out more distinctly to notice in the following portion of the address, which the minister is then instructed to deliver. “I, for my part, shall be ready: and, according to mine office, I bid you in the name of God; I call you in Christ's behalf; I exhort you, as ye love your own salvation, that ye will be partakers of this holy Communion. And as the Son of God did vouchsafe to yield up his soul by death upon the cross for your salvation, so it is your duty to receive the Communion in remembrance of the sacrifice of his death, as He Himself hath commanded: which, if ye shall neglect to do, consider with yourselves how great injury ye do unto God, and how sore punishment hangeth over your heads for the same, when ye wilfully abstain from the Lord's table, and separate from your brethren, who come to feed on the banquet of that most heavenly food.”

And here if we pause to analyse the passage, and examine the different members of which it is

composed, we shall perceive that it contains a variety of the most powerful arguments, adapted to the different feelings of the human heart. Are you alive to sentiments of religion, and desirous of promoting the glory of God? “In the name of God” you are bidden to this holy feast: of God, who hath “given us richly all things to enjoy<sup>1</sup>;” who hath made, who preserveth, who hath redeemed, and who sanctifieth us; who is pleased to declare Himself “honoured<sup>2</sup>” by the imperfect but well-intentioned services of his humble creatures, and who hath appointed this special service as one whereby we may avow and declare ourselves his servants in the sight of men, and thereby render honour to that “worthy name whereby we are called<sup>3</sup>. ” Are you susceptible of feelings of gratitude? We “call you in Christ’s behalf:” in behalf of that Son of God, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and “humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation, and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross<sup>4</sup>;” and when He was now about to submit to his extreme agony and most bitter passion, ordained this holy sacrament to be observed in return for his affection, and “in remembrance of him<sup>5</sup>. ” Are you capable of being

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 17.      <sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 30.      <sup>3</sup> James ii. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Phil. ii. 8.      <sup>5</sup> Luke xxii. 19.

wrought upon by the dictates of self-love, and a regard to self-preservation? We "exhort you as you love your own salvation, that you will be partakers of this holy Communion:" for it is the appointed means of present grace, and the pledge of future glory; it is that whereby, if we worthily receive it, "we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood; whereby we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us:" whereby "our souls are strengthened and refreshed" in this life, and we may trust to be "raised up by him at the last day<sup>1</sup>." Can you duly estimate the value of religious obedience, and are you prepared to practise it for conscience' sake? Remember, that "as the Son of God did vouchsafe to yield up his soul by death upon the cross for your salvation, so it is your duty to receive the Communion in remembrance of the sacrifice of his death, as He Himself hath commanded." Are you sensible to the consequences of disobedience, and of your forsaking those paths which God Himself hath ordained to be the avenues to salvation? We pray you then to "consider with yourselves, how great injury ye do unto God by your neglect, and how sore punishment hangeth over your heads for the same; when ye wilfully abstain from the Lord's table, and separate from

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 54.

your brethren, who come to feed on the banquet of that most heavenly food." For, in truth, the wilful neglect of this sacrament is both a direct violation of a positive law of God, whom you therefore provoke to punish you; and it is at the same time an excommunication of yourselves from the Church of Christ, and a renunciation of the privileges of a Christian: notwithstanding the participation of those privileges is necessary to your spiritual welfare, as the participation of ordinary food is necessary to the sustenance and welfare of your bodies; and notwithstanding it is only by being united to "the Church," which is "the body of Christ," that we can preserve our spiritual vigour, thus transmitted to us through the regularly constituted channel from Him who is the "head<sup>1</sup>."

IX. We have thus surveyed the things, which the Church in this most impressive and affectionate exhortation recommends you, my beloved brethren, to consider: and for your encouragement she tells you in conclusion, that "these things if you earnestly consider, ye will, by God's grace, return to a better mind." In order to this let me entreat you; to you in particular I speak, my brethren, who may be habitually guilty of this neglect; and

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 18.

you I earnestly entreat, not to dismiss the argument from your thoughts as soon as you withdraw from the house of God, but to carry it away with you to your respective homes, and to make it the subject of your private meditations. The exhortation, which conveys the authoritative sentence of the Church upon this important business, and which, as the minister of the Church, I have at this time pressed upon your attention, you will find in your Books of Common Prayer. Peruse that exhortation, I entreat you, carefully and seriously by yourselves, with fervent prayer to Almighty God, that He will be pleased to enlighten your understandings, and enable you to discern and embrace the truth: deliberately examine the arguments which it suggests for your devout communication in the holy sacrament, and weigh against them the reasons which you may be disposed to plead for refusing to communicate.

If by this method you cannot satisfy "your own conscience, but require further comfort or counsel," follow the advice and instruction given by the Church in her other exhortation; "and come to your parochial minister, or to some other minister of God's word," in whose discretion and learning you confide, "and open your grief," that your conscience may be quieted, and your scruples and doubts may be removed.

Such an examination of your Christian duty will, I trust, not be ineffectual. At least it will induce you, not to “make light” of God’s gracious invitation; not to treat it as an affair of trivial occurrence and unimportant concern, which you may neglect “for your farm or your merchandize” as you please: and it will probably awaken your thoughts to some sense of the seriousness of the subject, and prepare you for further improvement and still better impressions, even if it should fail of rendering you at present a devout and worthy communicant.

But I am willing to persuade myself, that in many instances such an examination may be productive of more beneficial consequences: that it may inspire you with more pious affections towards God; that it may inflame your gratitude to your Redeemer; that it may quicken your anxiety, and animate your exertions, for your own salvation; and fill you with a salutary dread of disregarding any of the Divine precepts; and prompt you faithfully to keep this and all the other commandments, and blamelessly to walk in this and all the other ordinances, of the Lord.

These are the principles which should persuade you to a conscientious communication in the Lord’s Supper: and these are the effects which a worthy communication is calculated to produce. By the merciful dispensation of God our Saviour a con-

stant reaction is thus maintained between the cause and the effect. A sense of religious obligation brings a man to the holy Communion: and the Communion confirms and invigorates his religious sense. God grant, my brethren, that the bountiful provision be not lost on you: but that, by a diligent practice of “the means of grace,” you may be established in a firm and well-founded “hope of glory,” to the honour and praise of Almighty God, and to the everlasting salvation of your own souls, through Jesus Christ our Lord! To whom, in the unity of the Father and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed, as is most due, all might, majesty, and dominion, now, henceforth, and for ever. Amen.

Almighty God, who shewest to them that be in error the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness; grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

## DISCOURSE XIV.

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### THE CHURCH'S COMMON SERVICE A PRIMITIVE AND REASONABLE SERVICE.

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NEHEM. viii. 4—8.

And Ezra the Scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose ; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maseiah, on his right hand ; and on his left hand Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people ; (for he was above all the people ;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up : And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands : and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah . . . . and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law, and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

WE might search long among the different histories of the world, before we should find a scene

more impressive and affecting than that which is here represented. A whole people, recently re-established by God's mercy in their own country, from which for their sins they had been long banished ; assembled together to hear the solemn reading and exposition of their divinely-inspired law, now about to be revived amongst them ; and bowing down in lowly adoration of the Lord, the great God, from whom they had received it. In order however to enter better into the spirit of the description, it will be useful to advert to the previous condition and circumstances of the people, to whom it relates.

The Jews had been carried captive to Babylon, as a punishment for their great and incorrigible wickedness, and in conformity with numerous precise denunciations of the Lord by his prophets. But this captivity, originating in judgment, was to determine in mercy ; and so it was predicted that at the end of seventy years they should be restored to their own land. The period foretold arrived ; and the promised restoration took effect : for at the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia, "whose spirit the Lord stirred up, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom," authorising the return of the Jews from their captivity, "then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin," as we read in the beginning of the book of Ezra, "and the priests and the Levites, with all them

whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord, which is in Jerusalem. And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered. Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods ; even those did Cyrus, king of Persia, bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar," or, as he is otherwise called, Zerubbabel, "the prince of Judah." And "all these did Sheshbazzar bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem."

But so arduous and laborious an enterprise, as the resettling of a people in full possession of their own land, and in the complete enjoyment of their several religious, social, and domestick relations, was necessarily a work of time : for God, whose providence was over the work, left the execution and completion of it to the diligence and industry of men. Many obstacles also were raised to it by the malicious opposition of enemies from without, and many interruptions occurred from a want of spirit and energy within. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which contain a very interesting account of this portion of the Jewish history, will

inform you of the particulars. Still, notwithstanding all discouragements and opposition, the work gradually proceeded, and in the end received its accomplishment. Under the direction, first of Zerubbabel, then of Ezra, and lastly of Nehemiah, the people had the satisfaction of contributing successively to the restoration of their dwellings, of their altars, of their temple, and, finally, of the gates and walls of their city.

But another want remained to be supplied; a want, which they appear to have experienced in a considerable degree during their captivity, and which indeed may not improperly be accounted one of the causes from which the captivity itself had arisen. It is evident from a very remarkable occurrence in the reign of Josiah, that the knowledge of their sacred Scriptures had been almost totally lost among the Jews<sup>1</sup>. It is probable that the deficiency was in some measure supplied during the captivity; that copies of the law had become by degrees more numerous; and that the acquaintance of the people with it had in consequence increased. Much however still remained to be done. And now that they were again established in their own land, it became a subject of earnest solicitude with their governors, that they should serve God in it acceptably; and

<sup>1</sup> See 2 Kings xxii. 8—13.

in order thereto, should be put in possession of that religious knowledge, which it had pleased Him in ancient times to reveal for their instruction. Together therefore with anxiety and diligence in restoring their material buildings, Ezra, who is recorded to have been “a ready scribe in the law of Moses,” or a learned and skilful expositor of the law, combined an equal degree of care and industry in restoring the Holy Scriptures. By means of indefatigable attention and consummate wisdom, aided by that Holy Spirit, who had originally inspired the great lawgiver and the prophets of Israel, he effected a complete and correct edition of the Holy Scriptures; digested in the order, in which they now appear; and containing the several parts, which now, with the addition of his own and a few of the later books, constitute the canon of the Old Testament: and having introduced some additions and verbal alterations, rendered requisite by the existing state of things, he transcribed the whole into the Chaldean character, to which the people had been familiarized during their long captivity in Babylon.

His edition of the law of God being thus carefully prepared, he availed himself of a solemn opportunity for laying it before the people. Upon the feast of trumpets, when the commencement of the new year was celebrated with great festivity, it was usual for the people to assemble together

from all parts of the land to Jerusalem. Their zeal in this important affair appears to have coincided with the intentions of Ezra: for we are informed at the beginning of the chapter, from which my text is taken, that “all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water-gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe, to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel.” The good will of the instructor too co-operated with the desire of the people: for, as it then follows, “And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month;” namely, the seventh month of the ecclesiastical year, which corresponded with the first month of the civil year of the Hebrews, the commencement of which was proclaimed to the assembled people by the sound of trumpets. And the book being thus brought before them, and the people being thus expectant and attentive, then, as we read in the words of my text, “Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose: and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah,” six of the principal elders of the people, “on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hash-

badana, Zechariah, and Medullam," seven other of the principal elders. "And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; for he was above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up: and Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, and Bani, and She-rebiah," with other well-instructed and duly appointed persons whose names are enumerated, "and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law; and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." The solemnity of the whole of this proceeding, particularly when taken in connexion with the previous and actual condition of the people, is, I think you will agree with me, most impressive and affecting. The several circumstances, of which it consists, the reading of the law itself, the pious conduct of the minister, the provision made that the people might not hear only, but likewise understand the law, and withal their reverential deportment during the solemnity, may afford abundant materials for reflexion, applicable, I apprehend, to the religious services of our Church, and illustrative of her provisions.

I. First, then, the reading of the Holy Scriptures thus publickly for the instruction of the people became, from the time of Ezra, a constant practice in the Jewish synagogues, which indeed are supposed by some learned men to have been instituted for this and other sacred purposes at the period under our observation. However this may be, the practice, whenever commenced, was continued in our Saviour's days, and those of his Apostles. As St. James informs us in his speech to the council of Jerusalem, "Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day<sup>1</sup>." And together with the reading of Moses was united that of the prophets, as St. Luke relates in the Acts of the Apostles, that in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia St. Paul stood up to preach to the people, "after the reading of the law and the prophets<sup>2</sup>;" and as St. Paul testifies in the course of his preaching on that occasion, that "the prophets were read at Jerusalem every Sabbath day<sup>3</sup>."

The *propriety* of this practice, if indeed it were of questionable propriety, might be inferred from the conduct of our blessed Lord; whose "custom it was to go into the synagogue on the Sabbath day<sup>4</sup>;" and who, by participating in the services

<sup>1</sup> Acts xv. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Ver. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Luke iv. 16.

there performed, may be considered as giving them the sanction of his approbation. The *utility* of the practice may be inferred from a remarkable particular in the period of the Jewish history subsequent to its establishment: inasmuch as to this practice, probably with good reason, has been attributed the preservation of the people from those idolatrous and superstitious usages of the neighbouring nations, to which in former times they had been addicted.

Agreeable to the practice thus observed in the Jewish Church was that of the early Christian. It is apparently recognized by St. Paul, where he says to the Thessalonians, “I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren<sup>1</sup>;” and to the Colossians, “when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea<sup>2</sup>.” But what is more directly to our purpose is the testimony of an author (Justin Martyr), who wrote in the second century of the Christian æra; “On the day,” saith he, “which is called Sunday, there is an assembly of all those who live either in the cities or in the country; and those things which are written of, or by, the Apostles, and the writings of the Prophets, are read as long as time will permit<sup>3</sup>. ”

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. v. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Col. iv. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Apolog. i. 67.

Upon this primitive practice is founded that of our apostolical Church. To the Scriptures of the Old Testament are added those of the New. The types of the law are accompanied with the anti-types of the Gospel. The promises of the Prophets are combined with the historical completion of them recorded by the Apostles. Thus by means of the first lessons from the Old Testament and the second from the New, and of the Gospels and Epistles, which are read in our Churches every Sabbath and other holy day, much benefit accrues to the people. The advantages indeed of this mode of instruction are obvious and important. Many persons cannot read the Scriptures themselves. Many who can, will not, or do not read them. But no small number of these persons is drawn together to attend the publick service of the congregation. And although they may not have the alacrity of the people spoken of in my text, who "gathered themselves together as one man," and "spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses;" yet, when the book of God is brought, they can hardly fail of hearing some portion of its contents, and acquiring some knowledge of the truths which it reveals or records, and the duties which it teaches and inculcates. The chapters, and parts of chapters, which are read at our morning and evening prayers, and in the Communion Service, every Sabbath-day,

contain very valuable Scriptural information. Many of the most important facts, both in the patriarchal and the Jewish, as well as in the evangelical history; many striking predictions and the particulars of their accomplishment; all of the great doctrines of our holy faith, and of its rules of holy living, come at different times to the notice of the constant and attentive hearer, in the words of the Holy Spirit of God.

Let me not be understood as by any means intending to intimate, that any man, who is able to attain more knowledge of the Scriptures, ought to be contented with this. Undoubtedly he ought not. He ought, not only to hear the holy Scriptures, but to read them: he ought to "search" them, as our blessed Lord enjoined the Jews to do<sup>1</sup>, to "search them daily," as the Evangelist commends the noble-minded Bereans for having done<sup>2</sup>; he ought to endeavour to do that which St. Paul commended in Timothy; namely, so to study the holy Scriptures as to "know" them<sup>3</sup>; to know them, not only in detached and independent members, but united and in the whole. Still the publick reading of those portions, which form the Lessons, the Epistles, and the Gospels in the Church Service, is calculated to produce a beneficial effect to a certain and that no inconsiderable

<sup>1</sup> John v. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 11.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 15.

extent. It serves as an instrument for instructing those who are not in possession of any other, as well as those who will not avail themselves of that which they do possess. It keeps alive attention to the only authorized revelation of God's will. It may frequently excite a rational curiosity; and by the suggestion of interesting topicks encourage the inquisitive mind to pursue the investigation of matters thus suggested to its notice. Instances of its being thus beneficial to individuals are doubtless in great number. At the same time the publick benefit of it cannot but be great. Had the practice, which prevailed in the primitive Church, of publickly reading the Scriptures in the vernacular language of the respective congregations, been continually maintained in the several countries of Christendom, it may be doubted how far that universal darkness, which overspread the Christian world, during the ascendancy of the Roman Pontiff, could ever have taken effect. Thus much is certain; that for the removal of that darkness one of the most effectual means, under the blessing of Divine Providence, was a re-establishment of the publick reading of the Bible in the vernacular languages of the several countries of Europe. The force of the argument was especially felt by the conflicting parties in this kingdom. As the early dawn of the Reformation commenced in attempts to make the Scriptures

known to the people, so the most zealous exertions were employed on the other hand to obstruct the progress of the Reformation by preventing that knowledge from being communicated. And whilst, in the course of its gradual advance, the Primate of England, Archbishop Cranmer, and the other Protestant Bishops and patrons of the reformed doctrine, were using every effort for causing the English Bible to be placed and read in all the parish churches of the kingdom, the supporters of popery were equally indefatigable in endeavouring to exclude it, and in forbidding the reading of it to the people.

II. But we proceed to other considerations arising out of the text. The reading of the Law, as there hath been already occasion to remark, was the express object of the assembly. The manner, however, in which this business was undertaken, is well worthy of our regard: “And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people: and when he opened it, all the people stood up: And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.”

Now here I think we may plainly perceive the union, which subsists between the reading of the

Scriptures to the people and the offering of adoration and thanksgiving to Almighty God. Ezra appears evidently to have supposed, that to “bless the Lord, the great God,” to thank Him for his goodness, and to pray to Him for his grace, was the proper introduction to the hearing of his holy word : and the people appear to have seconded the sentiment; for they answered Amen, Amen, they expressed their cordial concurrence in the benediction of the minister, “ and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord.”

I have already adverted to the practice, which prevailed in the Jewish synagogues subsequently to this time, of reading their sacred Scriptures publickly to the people. It is hardly necessary to state, that the offering to God of the united prayers of the congregation formed part of the business of those meetings. For this is so obvious a business of meetings avowedly for religious purposes, that we should hardly suppose it possible, if we did not know it to be a fact, that any such should be held without it. That, however, which may be more useful to be remarked on the present occasion, is the mode in which the Jews proceeded in the worship of their synagogues ; namely, by liturgies, or prescribed forms of prayer, specimens of which remain in our possession at the present day. Now, as our blessed Lord was an habitual attendant upon these services, a very reasonable argu-

ment is thence derived, that to forms of prayer, as such, He entertained no objection: for otherwise, considering the opportunities, of which He was perpetually availing Himself, for prescribing rules to regulate the conduct of his disciples, and for cautioning them against the adoption of existing evils, it can hardly be supposed but that He would have taken occasion to guard us against this particular practice, if He had disapproved of it, and to guide us into the way of true and sincere devotion.

It were impossible to enlarge on this argument; much more so, to dwell at due length on the practices of the Church connected with the general duty of publick prayer. Yet some points, more immediately resulting from the subject before us, it may be well cursorily to mention. The reading of the Holy Scriptures in our congregations you know to be intimately associated with provision for their devotional exercises, as was likewise the case in the primitive Christian assemblies. The instructions of the Bible are incorporated with invocations and blessings of "the Lord, the great God." We avow that the purpose, for which "we assemble and meet together," is "to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at his hands, to set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his most holy word, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as

the soul." And, as we introduce, so also we follow up, the lessons from Holy Writ, with confession of sins, with prayers for mercy, and with psalms and hymns of thanksgiving.

Again; the union intimated in the text, between the devotions of the priest and of the congregation, is satisfactorily exemplified in our publick services. To every prayer and thanksgiving of the minister, it is provided, that the people shall express their assent, by saying Amen at the conclusion of it; and not only so, but many portions of our liturgy are disposed in such a manner, as to call upon the congregation at large to take their part by regular responses in the service of the Church: a practice, which, as we know it to have been prevalent in the Jewish services of old, so also do we know it to have prevailed in the early Christian churches, and have reason to believe that it is not without its prototype in the assemblies of the blessed spirits in heaven<sup>1</sup>: a practice, however, let it be observed, for the prevalence of which in modern times we are indebted to those pious men, who, whilst they provided that we should read and hear the wonderful works of God in the tongue wherein we were born, provided likewise, that the publick prayers of the Church should be administered in language understood by the people. How

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah vi. 3. Rev. vii. 9—12. xix. 1—6.

necessary such a provision is to the edification of the people, must be obvious, we might suppose, to every person of reflexion : for when prayer is made in an unknown tongue, and such we are well aware was the case with the established worship of this country whilst in the Romish Communion, however the priest may “ bless with the spirit,” it is impossible that “ he who occupieth the room of the unlearned can say Amen at his giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what the priest sayeth <sup>1</sup>.”

Further ; in those forms of prayer which the Church hath provided, modelled as they are upon the platform of the liturgies of the primitive Church, and purified from the corruptions of the Popish times, we inherit the most valuable examples of Christian piety and devotion ; a rich treasury of evangelical doctrine ; and perpetual monuments and memorials of practical holiness. But I must not allow myself to dwell. Suffice it therefore to remark, that he, who shall most constantly and seriously join in these forms of devotion, will be best prepared to entertain the lessons of truth and holy living, which the Scriptures teach ; and to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, as the means of present patience and comfort, and the avenue to everlasting life.

### III. But thirdly, in continuance of our observa-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 16.

tions on the text, it should be remarked, that, together with the reading of the law and the accompanying benedictions and adoration, a third service was combined, namely, that of expounding the law to the people. As the assembly “worshipped the Lord, the great God,” beseeching his blessing doubtless for their proper understanding of what was read, as well as praising him for enabling them to hear and to read it, so they took the best human means of giving furtherance to that gracious vouchsafement on his part, by exerting those abilities and profiting by those opportunities, which he had intrusted to them for the purpose. “Joshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”

Some persons may perhaps be inclined to ask, what there was for these Levites to cause the people to understand. The book of the law being read to them, they might have understood it altogether of themselves. And yet they, who have formed such an opinion, may probably on reflection see, that it is not so well founded as they may have imagined. One cause of difficulty may have been the change of language between the law, as originally written by Moses, and as now recited by Ezra: for you will remember it has been al-

ready stated, that part of the service, rendered by this “ready scribe in the law,” was to transcribe it in that language, with which the Jews during their captivity had become conversant. But, more than this; he who recollects that above a thousand years had elapsed between the original delivery of the law by Moses and this revival of it by Ezra; and who likewise bears in mind the various religious, political, civil, and domestick revolutions, which had occurred in the affairs of Israel and Judah since its delivery; will probably be prepared to suppose, that many particulars may have belonged to it requiring such explanation, as those, who were not duly trained to the inquiry, may not have been qualified to supply: as in England it is not every man who without explanation is capable of understanding the records of doomsday book, or the provisions of the great charter of the land.

But, from whatever cause, the fact is expressly stated, that “the Levites caused the people to understand the law; so they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.” The practice was ever continued in the service of the synagogue; one division of which was the expounding of the Scriptures, and preaching from them to the people. This division, as well as the other two, to which I have previously adverted, was sanctioned by the presence and by the practice

of our blessed Lord and his Apostles. And agreeable to this was the proceeding of the early Christian Church ; for the same ancient writer, to whom I before referred, as reporting that the writings of the prophets and apostles were read in the Christian assemblies on Sundays as long as time would permit, thus pursues his statement : “ When the reader hath done, he that presides in the assembly admonishes and exhorts us to put those good things which we have heard in practice. And afterwards we rise up with one consent, and send up our prayers to God : ” so that here we have the constituent parts of the publick service of the primitive Church, corresponding with the prayers, the reading of the Scriptures, and the sermon, as practised in our own.

But this by the way. The point, now immediately before us, is to notice the practice of the Church with relation to the sermon, or the exposition and application of Scriptural truth. It has been already intimated, how great value our excellent reformers ascribed to the holy Scriptures, and to their being publickly read to the people. It should not be concealed, that the same pious, judicious, and learned men were aware also, that the Scriptures were liable to be not properly understood, and made provision for the proper understanding of them. The fact is remarkable, that at the commencement of king Edward the sixth's

reign, when a copy of the large Bible was ordered to be placed in every parish church of England for the benefit of the people, an order was also given for an easy paraphrase on the Gospels to be placed there, that the people might "have some help to lead them into the understanding of the Scriptures," and "for their better instruction in the sense and knowledge of them<sup>1</sup>." Provision was also made at that and at subsequent times, that regular instruction should be given to the people from the pulpit: but the low state of learning, into which the clergy were then unhappily sunk, not enabling them all to supply such instruction to the edification of their hearers, the homilies were prepared and set forth as means of temporary instruction<sup>2</sup>. Such provisions bear witness to the sense of our Reformers, on the importance of assisting and directing the people in their hearing and reading of the word of God: to the end that their ministers might not only "read in the book of the law of God distinctly," but might also "give the sense and cause them to understand the reading."

I trust that I shall not be suspected of entertaining a desire, indeed my former observations on another branch of my subject are inconsistent

<sup>1</sup> Johnson's Historical Account of English Translations of the Bible.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, as above.

with a desire, to withhold from the people the free reading of holy Scripture, or to prevent them from a reasonable exercise of their judgment on its contents. On the contrary, every Christian by the great charter of his faith, every Protestant by the very principles of Protestantism, is authorised and required, so far as he has ability, to search the Scriptures diligently, and to think and judge of them for himself. But at the same time this is quite consistent with another opinion, that much assistance is generally necessary for enabling the reader to judge rightly: and that the question of Philip to the Ethiopian nobleman, with reference to a particular portion of holy writ, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” perpetually admits of no other answer than that which the nobleman returned, “How can I, except some man should guide me<sup>1</sup>? ”

Unmixed good seldom, if ever, falls to the lot of man. Great and invaluable as are the blessings which the Reformation was the occasion of conferring upon Christendom, they were not unaccompanied by an alloy of evil, which, arising from the uncontrolled exercise of private judgment in religious things, showed itself in a multiplication of religious sects, and in the diffusion of various species of religious error. Whilst we gratefully

<sup>1</sup> Acts viii. 30, 31.

acknowledge the blessings, which we have thus derived from our forefathers, we can hardly fail to deplore that we are not exempt from the concomitant evils. With a spirit of free inquiry on religious matters, by which our days have been especially signalized, has been combined a spirit of licentious and rash interpretation. Accordingly, these, I apprehend, are not the days, in which a representation of the utility of ministerial aid to teach men to understand the Scriptures will be most readily accepted and admitted. We seem, in the estimation of some men, to have reached the time, when "all the Lord's people are prophets<sup>1.</sup>" But such representations are not on that account less necessary to be made. Their necessity is indeed rather the more augmented. For when Scriptural knowledge is accounted a thing of every day's acquisition, or rather of intuitive perception; when days and nights and months and years of systematick and indefatigable study are supposed to confer no superiority of attainment on the most devoted investigator of holy writ; and when the illiterate mechanick steps into the field of controversy, not only as the independent guide of his own faith, but as the authoritative controller of that of others, with all the arrogance of a self-derived commission, and all the

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xi. 21.

presumption of ignorance and folly: it does then become peculiarly necessary to be stated, that much of previous industry, research, and instruction is requisite to the full apprehension of the ample contents of the holy volume; and that not only he, who would rightly “divide the word of truth” for the benefit of others, and be a faithful “minister of Christ and steward of the mysteries of God,” but that he also, who would rightly understand that word, and penetrate into those mysteries, must have endeavoured to become so “instructed unto the kingdom of heaven,” as to “bring forth,” when occasion may require, “out of his treasure things new and old<sup>1</sup>:” and must therefore have endeavoured to become acquainted with many matters of critical and philological inquiry; with many particulars of historical, chronological, and geographical research; with many accidents of a local and temporal nature; with many national and personal peculiarities; with many particulars of natural history and science; in a word, with the detail of numerous branches of study, the very existence of which has probably never entered into the mind of many a self-commissioned ambassador of Christ and self-authorised minister of God’s word. Such considerations as these, whilst they should operate as an incentive upon all who have opportunity, and especially on

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 52.

those who are put in trust with the dispensation of the Gospel, to follow the advice of St. Paul to Timothy, and “give attendance to reading<sup>1</sup>;” form at the same time an unanswerable argument, why persons of limited opportunities should be “ swift to hear, slow to speak,” on matters of Scriptural inquiry ; and should seek knowledge at the lips of God’s minister<sup>2</sup>, who is duly commissioned to dispense it ; and “receive with meekness the ingrafted word,” which when rightly received and cultivated “is able to save their souls<sup>3</sup>;” but wherein, it must not be concealed, “are many things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable” too often unhappily “wrest unto their own destruction<sup>4</sup>. ”

Following the course suggested by the very affecting and impressive narrative in my text, I have thus laid before you, my brethren, certain remarks on the utility of the several parts of our Church service. The subject has unavoidably carried us to a considerable extent ; still however a few words of practical application must be allowed me in conclusion.

First then, I would exhort you to a reverential attention to the word of God, as read in the publick

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Mal. ii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> James i. 21.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Peter iii. 16.

services of the congregation. The conduct of the Jews in this particular was most exemplary. They received it, when read to them by Ezra, with the most profound veneration, as we have already had occasion to observe: and, as we learn from the verse following my text, “all the people wept when they heard the words of the law.” Grateful for the mercies of God, and sensible withal of their own manifold infirmities and acts of disobedience, they received the word with lowly expressions of thankfulness, and tokens of humiliation and repentance. The conduct of our forefathers in this country, when the Bible was set before them in their own tongue at the Reformation, is in point, and deserving of your notice. “It was wonderful,” says an historian of those times, “to see with what joy this book of God was received, not only among the more learned, and those who were noted lovers of the Reformation, but generally all over England, among all the common people; and with what greediness God’s word was read, and what resort there was to the places appointed for reading it. Every one that could bought the book, and busily read it, or heard it read: and many elderly persons learned to read on purpose<sup>1</sup>.” Some of this eagerness may perhaps be placed to the account of the novelty and strangeness of the

<sup>1</sup> Strype’s Life of Archbishop Cranmer.

case: much of it, we doubt not, is to be attributed to a higher and holier sentiment. In this latter regard it is well worthy of your imitation: and doubtless you will not fail to imitate it, if you seriously reflect, that the book, which they were so desirous of learning, is the revelation of God's will to men, and is "able to make them wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus<sup>1</sup>."

Secondly, with reverential attention to the holy Scriptures, let me exhort you to unite a constant and serious participation in the devotions of the Church. We read in the text, that when "Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, all the people answered Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground." If you would derive benefit from God's word, you must derive it through the medium of his grace. If you would enjoy his grace, you must solicit it by prayer. It is one of the greatest blessings conferred upon us, as members of the Protestant Church of England and Ireland, that we are provided with the most admirable forms of supplicating God in a language which we understand. This blessing was withheld from us in the times of popery. As

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 15.

the source of religious information and improvement was rendered inaccessible by the Scriptures being confined to unknown tongues, so the avenues to God's throne were impeded by the prayers of the Church being offered in a language not understood by the people. Whether the number of our congregations be increased in proportion to our better opportunities of serving God acceptably, as afforded by the Reformation, may perhaps admit of a question. Certain at least it is, that in one department of publick worship the members of our congregations are very remiss in profiting by the benefit which is at their command: for notwithstanding the facility, for which they are indebted to the Reformation, of communicating in the holy sacrament of Christ's body and blood, multitudes amongst us make no more use of their Christian and Protestant privilege, than when the sacramental cup was denied them by the unscriptural and injurious proscription of the Romish Church. But, my brethren, if you are desirous of deriving effectual benefit from the hearing and reading of God's holy word, you must derive it through the channel which He has appointed. You must communicate with Him in prayer, and especially in that peculiar mode of devotion ordained to be observed in remembrance of his great mercy in Christ Jesus. To the prayers and praises of your ministers you must heartily

add your Amen. You must unite with them in their petitions and thanksgivings to the throne of the heavenly grace. You must "lift up holy hands" in his sanctuary, "without wrath or doubting." You must "bow the head and worship."

Thirdly, let me exhort you to give attendance to those who are over you in the Lord, and who watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy. "The people stood in their place," as we find it in the text, "and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law," whilst Ezra and the Levites "read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." It is no abridgement, believe me, of your Christian liberty to give heed to those, who bear God's commission to instruct you. We do not pretend to "have dominion over your faith," as is pretended by those who exercise their ministry in the Romish Church, but we would gladly be "helpers of your joy<sup>1</sup>";" by becoming "profitable," if it please God that we may be, and as the Scriptures themselves are designed to be, "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. i. 24.

may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works<sup>1.</sup>" It was the evil of those times of popish darkness, to which I have so often adverted, that, whilst the Church unjustly arrogated to herself an absolute control over the belief of her members, her ministers were not in a condition of intellectual improvement qualified to instruct them. With less high pretensions on the part of the Church, to which you have in the present day the happiness of belonging ; pretensions, established and regulated, we trust, on scriptural principles ; we presume to hope that her ministers are better qualified to discharge the office of giving instruction to their flocks. It is their duty, and they know it to be so, to endeavour, by God's blessing upon their studies, to become fit to instruct you. They believe it to be your duty to be willing to be instructed by them. And this duty they conceive to belong to you, not only upon the general ground, on which I have already insisted, of the difficulties presented by holy writ to those who have not made it the peculiar subject of their study : but more especially upon the ground, that God acteth not in vain ; that He hath appointed an order of men in uninterrupted succession from his Apostles for the express purpose of preaching his Gospel, and dispensing his mysteries to the peo-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

ple; and that those, whom He hath appointed, it is the business of his people to regard, lest they should be guilty of “despising not man but God’.”

Upon the whole, my beloved brethren, let us, as members of that pure and apostolical Church, happily established, by God’s blessing, in this favoured kingdom, cordially concur in the services of religion, which our holy Mother hath provided for our edification. “The Lord hath turned again the captivity of our Sion,” as He of old turned that of his chosen people, the Jews. “The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we” have abundant reason to “rejoice<sup>2</sup>. ” Let us continually go ourselves, and let us encourage and assist our brethren and companions to go, “into the house of the Lord.” Let our “feet” habitually “stand within the gates of Jerusalem.” Let us “wish it prosperity.” Let us “seek to do it good.” O, “pray for the peace of it<sup>3</sup>!” And be we well assured, that all who sow according to God’s will and commandments, although, in this state of suffering and of trial, it may be the lot of many to “sow in tears, shall reap in joy:” and that “he who now goeth on his way weeping,” as

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Psal. cxxvi. 1. 4.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 8. Psal. cxxii. 1, 2. 6. 8, 9.

we all more or less must do for the afflictions that visit or surround us, yet if he “bear good seed,” the seed of God’s holy word, springing up into fruits of righteousness, “shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him<sup>1</sup>. ”

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, three Persons in the unity of one Godhead, be blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, henceforth world without end.  
Amen.

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen<sup>2</sup>.

Most merciful Father, we beseech Thee to send upon thy servants, the ministers of thy Church, thy heavenly blessing; that they may be clothed with righteousness, and that thy word, spoken by their mouths, may have such success, that it may never be spoken in vain. Grant also, that thy

<sup>1</sup> Psal. cxxvi. 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Second Sunday in Advent.

people may have grace to hear and receive what thy ministers shall deliver out of thy most holy word, or agreeable to the same, as the means of their salvation: that in all our words and deeds we may seek thy glory, and the increase of thy kingdom, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Ordering of Priests.

## DISCOURSE XV.

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### THE CHURCH'S LITURGY, ITS IMPORTANCE, ADVANTAGES, AND APOSTOLICAL CHARACTER.

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1 TIM. ii. 1, 2.

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men ; For kings, and for all that are in authority ; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

WE have this day been again exercising the privilege, which, as members of that part of the Holy Catholick and Apostolical Church established by God's good Providence in this kingdom, we have the happiness to enjoy, of addressing ourselves to the throne of the heavenly grace in a manner conformable to the exhortation conveyed in these words of St. Paul to Timothy: a privilege, which you exercise, my brethren, as often as you meet together within these hallowed walls for the purposes of publick devotion. I call it a privilege: for so scriptural are the principles, and so agreeable to primitive

example are the practices, which distinguish our celebration of divine worship, that I esteem the use of such a liturgy as we possess, amongst the principal blessings attendant upon a diligent and serious communion with the Church of this kingdom. And I have accordingly chosen the passage just recited, as affording a good occasion for engaging your minds in a consideration of the excellence of our Liturgy, and of the benefit of participating in its services.

The passage occurs in one of the Epistles, addressed by St. Paul to Timothy, whom the Apostle had converted to the Christian faith, whom he had ordained Bishop of the Ephesian Church, and whom in these Epistles he instructs in the several duties belonging to his episcopal function. In the course of these instructions he introduces, at a very early period, the exhortation in my text : “I exhort therefore that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men ; for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty :” an exhortation, the importance of which is evinced by the earnestness of the Apostle in inculcating it, “I exhort therefore, first, or principally, of all ; and which in substance is generally understood to convey directions concerning the due performance of publick worship, in the churches and congrega-

tions under Timothy's episcopal charge and jurisdiction. And further it appears to have been the Apostle's intention, that such worship should be performed by a liturgy, or a set and prescribed form of prayer; for otherwise it is difficult to conceive how the authority of Timothy could be effectually exercised in the regulation of it: agreeably to what had been the practice of the ancient Jewish Church before the coming of our Saviour; agreeably to what we have sufficient reason to believe was the practice of the primitive and Apostolical Church of Christ; and agreeably to what has continued to be the practice of all duly-constituted Christian Churches, who in the general adoption of a liturgical service, and in the composition of its several members, have been directed by the rules comprised in this Apostolical exhortation.

According to this view of the subject suggested by the words of the Apostle, it is my intention to proceed in the present Discourse; in which it will be my endeavour to convince you, first, of the primary importance which belongs to prayer in all religious assemblies; secondly, to point out the advantages which result from a liturgy, or a set form of prayer; and thirdly, to place before you and to illustrate the conformity of our English Liturgy, with the rules contained in the advice of the Apostle. The subject is evidently one, which

ought to be understood by all the members of our communion, and ought, therefore, to be occasionally treated of by their ministers: and I trust that it may be treated of in such a manner, as may serve to confirm our own attachment to the mode and forms of worship which the Church has adopted, without being understood as intended to convey any uncharitable reflexions upon those whose principles and practices are not in agreement with our own.

I. I am first to speak of the primary importance which belongs to prayer in all religious assemblies: a point, the more necessary to be noticed, because the practice of many, who are frequent in their attendance upon sermons, and watchful in listening to the preacher, but who at the same time are very irregular, or remiss, or inattentive, with respect to the prayers of the Church, who either absent themselves from the service when the prayers are not to be followed by a sermon, or who are not careful to be present before the commencement, and during the entire performance of the service, or who take little or no share or interest in it whilst they are present, is a proof that they entertain erroneous notions upon this subject, and estimate very inaccurately the comparative value of the several offices, for which religious assemblies are held.

I say, then, that in religious assemblies prayer is that part of the service, which is of primary importance.

1. It is so, as it relates to Almighty God, whose glory should be the end and aim of all our actions. Preaching is designed to instruct and encourage men to promote God's glory: praying engages them in the actual promotion of it: it is founded in a sense of his perfections, of his power, his wisdom, his goodness; and it comprises an open acknowledgment and avowal of those perfections.

2. Again: prayer is of primary importance, as it relates to ourselves in our capacity of moral agents, and of candidates for salvation; and who in that capacity have certain duties which we are bound to perform. Preaching is designed, in aid and exposition of holy Scripture, to teach men what are their duties; prayer, at the same time that it conveys the like instruction, is the actual performance of one of the highest duties that they have to fulfil.

3. Prayer, again, is of the first importance, as it relates to those with whom in each of these departments we communicate. By preaching, communication is maintained between the minister and the people, so far as regards the purposes of publick instruction: by prayer, communication is maintained between God and man. It is the appointed means, whereby we keep up an inter-

course with our Maker; with whom we on the one hand are thus enabled to converse, and who on the other hand then condescends to be present, and to hold communion with us by his Spirit.

4. Further, the great importance of prayer appears, when it is considered with relation to the feelings which naturally accompany it. Preaching indeed, if attended to conscientiously for the purpose of spiritual edification and improvement, will hardly fail of producing in the hearer seriousness, humility, piety; yet we know that the preacher is often listened to with attention, at the same time that no feelings of a religious character are excited in the mind of the hearer: but it should seem that no person can join with attention in prayer to God, without being awakened to some sense of his own wants, infirmities, and unworthiness, and of the perfections of that Being, whose ear heareth the prayer, and whose eye considereth all the inhabitants of the earth.

5. Lastly, the superior importance of prayer over preaching appears from a consideration of their subsequent effects. All the means of grace indeed, and preaching, which is one of them, co-operate in making "the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." But some of these means are more essential and indispensable than others. A constant performance of his devotional exercises, attended with such private

study and instruction as his opportunities afford, may enable a man to lead a godly, righteous, and sober life, although he may chance not to enjoy opportunities of hearing sermons: but no attendance upon sermons will make a man good, unless the instruction, which he thence receives, be quickened and rendered fruitful by prayer. Indeed one of the most unquestionable marks of a good man is earnestness in the service, and consequently diligence in the worship, of God: he, who does not serve God in prayer, cannot be a good man; so that to allow the possibility of a man being an attendant upon sermons, and not being a participant in prayer, is at once to allow the inefficacy of preaching towards the formation of the Christian character.

It is by no means my intention in these remarks, my brethren, to depreciate the utility of preaching. I am well persuaded that the ministerial office is of Divine appointment, as for other purposes, so likewise for the publick instruction of the people in the truths and duties of religion. As "the priest's lips should keep knowledge," so "should" the people "seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts<sup>1</sup>." But I am desirous of allotting to preaching its proper station: of representing it as valuable indeed, but still as of

<sup>1</sup> Mal. ii. 7.

secondary value to the duty of prayer: or rather, without derogating in any degree from the legitimate importance of preaching, I wish to set before you the duty of prayer in its proper light; to lead you to perceive, that it is not without reason that, adopting our Saviour's language, we consider the place of God's worship to be most appropriately represented as "the house of prayer<sup>1</sup>"; and to convince you, that when you meet together in this place, the "first" and most important business "of all," in which you are to engage, is, in conformity with the Apostle's exhortation, the performance of your publick devotional exercises, the offering of your "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks" to the throne of the heavenly grace.

II. We proceed, secondly, to a consideration of the advantages which result from liturgies or set and prescribed forms of prayer.

These advantages are numerous; and the consideration of them might easily be protracted to a great extent. I shall content myself with briefly stating five, which I apprehend to be amongst the most prominent and the most valuable.

1. A liturgy then has the advantage of being most easily understood, and most heartily fol-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxi. 13.

lowed, by the people; it preserves to the people a great religious privilege; it conduces most to the maintenance of order and decency in the Church; and it is the best security of soundness and consistency of doctrine.

A liturgy has, in the first place, the advantage of being most easily understood by the people.

And here it is hardly necessary to premise, that I am supposing a liturgy written in a language which the people are capable of understanding. We know, indeed, that for some time before the Reformation the forms of prayer in our part of the Catholick or universal Church of Christ, as is still the practice in those parts of the Western Church where the Reformation has not hitherto taken effect, were composed and offered up in an unknown tongue. The impropriety of this practice was then perceived and acknowledged. And the Church of England in her twenty-fourth Article accordingly declared, that "it is a thing plainly repugnant to the word of God, and the custom of the Primitive Church, to have publick prayer in the Church, or to minister the sacraments, in a tongue not understood of the people." And surely it is as agreeable to reason, as it is to holy Scripture and to primitive usage, that the congregation should be capable of understanding the language, which conveys their desires and thanksgivings to Almighty God, and which is at the

same time intended to be an instrument of their edification.

Thus then it has become the practice of our Church, as it was the practice of the whole Christian Church in the Apostles' times, to put up our devotions in the vulgar tongue, that is, in the common language of the country; in order that a service, in which all of us, whether ministers or people, are equally interested, may be understood and participated by all.

It is upon the same principle, that a liturgy or set form of prayer is preferred in our publick devotions; because, that we may recur to and proceed with our previous observation, it has the advantage of being most easily understood by the people. Having been composed with that precision, which is the result of full mature repeated deliberation, such as in all probability a composition of this kind will have undergone, it is not liable to be encumbered with the difficulties, which are incident to an extemporaneous and ill-digested effusion. Examine the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England with a view to this particular advantage; and you will find that its sense is no where obscured by hard or harsh expressions, entangled by long parentheses, disfigured by far-fetched metaphors, perplexed by abrupt and disjointed sentences, or drawn out to an unintelligible length by inordinate and ill-constructed periods.

It is plain, simple, and perspicuous. But even if it were less so, if in its composition it were not distinguished by that perspicuity of expression, which is one of its greatest beauties; still the recurrence of its services in publick, and yet more the opportunity of studying and examining it in private, would be a means of diminishing its difficulties to the people; and he that "occupieth the room of the unlearned" might, as the Apostle expresses it, be readily enabled to "say Amen with his understanding" to the petitions and thanksgivings which it contains<sup>1</sup>.

2. A liturgy again possesses the recommendation of being most heartily followed by the people. This, indeed, results in part from the former consideration. To that, which we imperfectly apprehend, we cannot heartily assent. A prayer, which is not embraced by the understanding, cannot be offered up by the spirit. But moreover, in order to pray with unreserved and unqualified earnestness, it is necessary, that, together with an understanding of the purport of our petitions, we have confidence also in their propriety; and that we be persuaded, not only that there is nothing sinful in them to stop us, but likewise that there is nothing ambiguous or questionable to make us hesitate and falter in our devotions. Of this con-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 16.

fidence, which it is hardly possible to repose in an extemporaheous effusion, or indeed in any merely human effusion with which we are not previously acquainted, a precomposed form of prayer is the best, perhaps I may safely say it is the only good security. In the case of extemporaheous prayer, no man, whatever may be his talents or acquirements, can give you sufficient assurance that his prayers will be such as you may thoroughly and heartily adopt. But with the Common Prayer Book at your command, to prepare you for your publick devotions, as well as to assist and direct you in them, for this security again you need not be at a loss. Conceived in the genuine spirit of Christian piety, its aspirations are not more perspicuous in their language, than they are in their matter holy and pure. The more fully and accurately you study them, the more deeply you will be impressed with a sense of their substantial excellency; and the better you will be prepared to unite heartily in offering them to the throne of the heavenly grace, to lift up your hands in the house of God "without doubting<sup>1</sup>," and to "ask in faith, nothing wavering<sup>2</sup>."

3. And this leads me to observe, that a liturgy possesses the further recommendation of preserving to the people a great religious privilege; by

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> James i. 6.

enabling them to take their part vocally, as well as mentally and heartily, in the publick worship of the Church; and so, not only to be "likeminded one towards another" in their devotions, but to "glorify God, with one mind and one mouth<sup>1</sup>."

It is upon this principle that the provisions for publick worship, as regulated by our Church, have been constructed. The Church has not only provided a form of prayer, to be the consistent and undeviating vehicle of the concord of sentiments which she inculcates upon her members, but she also encourages all her members to take an active part in the celebration of that form. While she directs her ministers to lead and guide the people in their devotions, she calls upon the people likewise to follow or accompany her ministers, not with their hearts only, but with their voices; not only with their minds, but with their mouths. To those, who are acquainted with the liturgical provisions of the Church, examples of what I am now saying will occur in the directions given for the "General Confession," for the "Lord's Prayer," for the "Amen" at the end of all the prayers, for the Doxology and the Psalms, for the Creeds, for the suffrages after the Apostles' Creed, for the entire Litany, and for the petitions for mercy and grace after each Commandment in the Communion

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xv. 5, 6.

Service : in all of which cases, and more, if more were necessary to be cited, provision is made for the whole congregation to come with their voices, as well as with their hearts and minds, to the throne of the heavenly grace, by either accompanying or answering the minister in the parts respectively adapted to these parts of our publick worship.

Now these provisions of the Church I take to confer upon the people, that is, upon the members of her congregations in general, a great spiritual privilege. For whilst they serve to fix and quicken the attention, and to animate the devotion, of those who will profit by them, and to give to publick prayer its proper character of an united, a common, address to the Almighty ; whilst also they are countenanced by numerous passages which might be adduced in support of them from the holy Scriptures ; they are in a great degree a characteristick, in this kingdom, of our pure and reformed part of the Church of Christ. From various passages in the early writers of the Church, and from specimens of ancient liturgies, we have good reason to be persuaded, that the practice of the people joining vocally with the minister in their devotions was established at a very early period in the Christian Church, probably at a period coeval with the Apostles themselves. This practice fell into disuse under the

domination of the Romish Church, obviously because the people at large could not take part of the service in a strange language. The practice, reasonable and scriptural as it was judged, was revived by our Church at the Reformation,<sup>1</sup> although not approved of by some of those Protestants who dissented from her, any more than by some of the members of the Romish Church: and it has ever since continued to form a conspicuous feature in the celebration of divine worship in that part of the Church of Christ, established by God's good providence in England and Ireland. This then is a great privilege, which you, my brethren, possess in the communion of our scriptural Church. But this privilege could not be possessed, unless the services of the Church were regulated by a prescript form of publick worship: so that a liturgy is highly to be valued, as securing to the people this great and precious privilege in the offering of their devotions to the throne of the heavenly grace.

4. Further, a liturgy possesses the advantage of contributing to the preservation of order and decency in the Church. The fruit, as is reasonably to be expected, of patient study and meditation, it affords no scope for casual ebullitions of passion, for the sallies of a fantastical imagination, for the blunders of ignorance, or the extravagances of fanaticism; deformities, little accordant with that

"beauty of holiness," which becomes the sanctuary of God. I do not wish to dwell upon the deficiencies of others, for the purpose of magnifying our own advantages: nor does the Liturgy of the Church of England need a foil to set off its excellences. Yet thus much I would observe as I pass on, that he who is best acquainted with, and can most properly estimate, the faults which reason would anticipate, which experience has witnessed, and which history records, in some at least of the advocates and practisers of extemporaneous prayer, is best qualified to value, as they deserve, the decent and solemn formularies, contained in that rich treasure-house of devotion, which the well-regulated zeal and pious moderation of our forefathers bequeathed for the edification of the Church.

5. Lastly, a liturgy is the best preservative of soundness and consistency of doctrine. Where the whole conduct of the service, praying as well as preaching, is left to the judgment of the individual minister, it is obvious that less important doctrines may be unduly obtruded upon notice; or those of greater moment may be withheld from observation; or even such as are false and groundless may be substituted for such as have their foundation in holy Scripture; according to the fancy, the conceit, the private prepossessions of the minister: and it is indisputable, that erro-

neous notions of religion may be conveyed to the minds of the congregation, altogether as effectually through the medium of prayer, as through that of more direct and avowed instruction. A liturgy, at the same time that it is a guide to the devotions of the people, operates also as a control upon the indiscretion or errors of the minister: a consideration this, which, we may observe by the way, assists in showing the superior importance of well-regulated prayer over preaching, as well as the advantages which attend a precomposed form of prayer. The Liturgy, which we have the happiness of possessing, after the example of the ancient liturgies, embodies in its several services all the great doctrines of the Gospel according to their relative importance: so that however defective may be the instruction which a congregation receives from the pulpit, if they rely on the Liturgy as their guide to the essential truths of Scripture, they will not materially err. As long as that Liturgy shall continue to be the established formulay of publick worship in this country, the pure profession of the Gospel cannot be lost amongst us: as long as the people shall heartily participate in the services, which that Liturgy prescribes, they cannot cease to hold fast a sound and orthodox faith.

III. But I proceed to set before you, and to

illustrate, as was proposed in the third place, the conformity of our Liturgy with the rules contained in the exhortation of the Apostle.

"I exhort," says St. Paul, "that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." If now you will consider the several members of this exhortation, and then turn your attention to the Book of Common Prayer, you will find in the latter ample provision for the different departments of worship, which the exhortation prescribes for our adoption.

By "supplications" we understand, in this passage, addresses to Almighty God for the removal or prevention of all things hurtful to us. Do you desire to find examples of these in our Liturgy? You will readily perceive them in the general confession at the commencement of our morning and evening services; in many of the daily or occasional collects; and especially in that division of the Litany or general supplication, where we call upon the good Lord to deliver us from the various perils and calamities, incident to our imperfect condition.

By "prayers" are here to be understood, not general acts of devotion, as the word very commonly imports, but, in a more definite and spe-

cifick sense, petitions for mercy and for the supply of our numerous wants. For these again you cannot be at a loss, if you will turn as before to the various collects, which the Church has appointed either for her daily services, or for the different Sundays and holydays in the year: or if you will examine those comprehensive articles in the latter division of the Litany, where we beseech the good Lord to hear us, that so it may please Him to grant the manifold blessings, which are then severally asked for from his bounty.

Do you require "intercessions," or intreaties in behalf of others, as well as of yourselves? The prayer for all Conditions of Men in the regular service, or the Litany again, or the prayer for the whole state of Christ's Church militant here in earth in the order of the holy Communion, are very satisfactory testimonies to the respect paid in our Common Prayer Book to this charitable portion of the exhortation.

Do you seek for examples of "giving of thanks?" The several psalms, and hymns, and doxologies, which are incorporated in our different services; the doxology, or the ascription of glory to God, in the order of the Communion; the general thanksgiving, which constantly occurs towards the conclusion both of morning and of evening prayer; are lively expressions of gratitude for mercies already received.

Are we directed to offer up these addresses to the throne of grace "for all men?" Our Liturgy provides us with forms of complying with the direction, in general terms, "for all sorts and conditions of men;" or in phrases of more particular application, so as to testify our benevolence to those, who might otherwise be, by possibility, supposed to be excluded from partaking in it; as for "all Jews, Turks, infidels, and hereticks," as well as for the good estate of Christ's holy Catholick Church; for "our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers," as well as for our countrymen and friends.

Finally, does the exhortation instruct us to pray and give thanks "for kings, and for all that are in authority?" In this respect again our Liturgy fails not to assist us. In compliance with the Apostle's precept, a special prayer for the welfare of the Sovereign is introduced into each of our different services: whilst, as the occasion appears to require, we are instructed also to put up our petitions for our temporal and spiritual rulers; for the magistrate, to whom is committed the exercise of the civil authority; and for the pastor, who is intrusted with the ministration of the Gospel of peace.

Thus entirely does the form of prayer, which the Church has appointed for her congregations, correspond in these several particulars with the exhortation of St. Paul. So comprehensive indeed

are her views, that it would be difficult to mention a want, fit to be made the subject of a publick petition, for which provision is not adequately furnished. And so scriptural withal are these provisions, and so well calculated to conspire with the word of God in producing the most salutary effects, as to authorise the assertion, that he who shall constantly, diligently, and conscientiously attend upon her services, and shall endeavour to conform his heart and conduct to the principles which animate her prayers, will not fail of being actuated by a lowly sense of his own infirmities, by a faithful reliance on the goodness of God, and by profound gratitude for the manifold blessings which he enjoys; by brotherly love to his fellow Christians, and universal charity for all mankind; by loyalty to his sovereign, and a meek and reverent submission towards all his superiors, whether in Church or State; in a word, by that true spirit of the Gospel, which the Apostle concludes with recommending as the result of well-regulated prayer, and which is manifested by a diligent endeavour to "lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

I have thus endeavoured to set before you, my brethren, as compendiously as I thought the subject would permit, the prime importance of prayer in religious assemblies; especially of prayer in a

precomposed and well-regulated liturgy, and most of all, of prayer in such a liturgy, as we have the happiness to possess. Be it your care, my brethren, to avail yourselves, as often as you are able, of your different opportunities of attending divine service according to that liturgy; and particularly be it your care to unite in it with sincerity, and to bring forth the fruits of it in your practice. Remember that your attendance upon this house, "the house of prayer," for which it is appointed, and "the house of God," to whom it is appropriate, will be useless and unprofitable, or rather will be but a mockery of God, if it does not engage you in the worship of Him, to whose service the house is consecrated. Remember therefore, that, when you assemble and meet together in this place, you assemble "first of all" for the purpose of joining in those "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and givings of thanks," which our holy mother the Church, in conformity to the Apostolical rule, hath provided and prescribes for her children; and in which it is your highest privilege, as well as your bounden duty, to unite; and so to "accompany" your minister "with an humble voice to the throne of the heavenly grace." But at the same time remember, that as you accompany him with an humble voice, so also you must "accompany him with a pure heart;" and that since God is a spirit, you must

worship Him in a manner suitable to his nature, “in spirit and in truth.” Finally remember, that you are to worship God not with your lips only, but in your lives; that the proper end of all your religious duties is to induce you and enable you, to give up yourselves continually to his service, and to walk before Him in holiness and righteousness all your days: that accordingly your progress in piety and virtue ought to be in proportion to the spiritual privileges that you enjoy; and that, as are your advantages for improvement, and greater advantages were never possessed by man, than we, my brethren, enjoy in the communion of our reformed and Apostolical Church, so also is your responsibility. Remember, therefore, as the scope and conclusion of the whole, that he only is a good and consistent member of the Church, who shows that her principles operate in him to the production of “a godly, righteous, and sober life;” and that an outward communication in her services will be utterly unavailable to a man’s salvation, and will indeed rather increase his condemnation, unless it make him more humble, more resigned, more grateful, more charitable; more careful in the discharge of his social obligations, more obedient to the laws of his country, a more dutiful subject to his sovereign, and a more faithful servant of God.

Which that we may all be, God grant of his

great mercy by the sanctifying influence of his Holy Spirit, and for the merits and through the intercession of his Son : to whom, in the unity of the Father and the Holy Spirit, one Lord and God Almighty, be ascribed the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Grant, O Lord, we beseech thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by thy governance, that thy Church may joyfully serve thee in all godly quietness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O Lord, we beseech thee mercifully to receive the prayers of thy people which call upon thee ; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## DISCOURSE XVI.

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### THE CHURCH'S PUBLICK WORSHIP, OFFICE OF THE PEOPLE THEREIN.

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ROMANS xv. 5, 6.

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus : That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I HAVE made choice of this prayer or benediction of the Apostle, for the purpose of drawing your attention to a particular circumstance in our form of publick worship ; a circumstance, almost characteristick indeed of the worship of our national Church, but of which many members of our congregations, not to say many congregations collectively, appear to be very insufficiently apprized, or very little regardful. Whether or not the present congregation be liable to this observation, is a question, on which I shall pronounce no opinion :

but leaving that to the decision of my hearers, I shall proceed at once to the subject, on which I am purposing to discourse; “and I beseech you, brethren,” those amongst you in particular, to whom my remarks may appear particularly applicable, I beseech, to “suffer the word of exhortation<sup>1.</sup>”

The Apostle's words are calculated to direct our attention to two ingredients in publick worship: the one, that concord of sentiment, on which all publick or congregational worship must be established; the other, that uniformity of manner, whereby such concord must be expressed. St. Paul, having uttered a prayer in behalf of the portion of the Church of Christ, to which his epistle was addressed, namely; the Christians at that time resident at Rome, and having therein “supplicated the God of patience and consolation to grant them to be like-minded one toward another,” adds, as the result of such likemindedness, “that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:” or, as the words are paraphrased by a distinguished commentator, Dr. Hammond, “that ye may join unanimously, Jews and Gentiles, into one; and, assembling together, worship and serve the Lord in all unity of affections and form of words.”

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xiii. 22.

I. That unity of affections in a Christian congregation, assembled for publick worship, is necessary, I shall not waste time in endeavouring to shew. Without it, such worship is altogether nugatory. Nor is unity of language less requisite: without it, the agreement of affections in the worshippers cannot be signified. The words of St. Paul, however, may be judged to point, not merely to unity of language, as the vehicle of unity of sentiment; but, moreover, to the union of a congregation, in the signification of such sentiments, in the utterance of such language. In other terms, they may be judged to intimate the propriety of a congregation joining vocally together in publick worship; and thus not merely acquiescing in the conveyance of their sentiments by the same form of words, but becoming themselves the agents of conveying them by the same organ of speech. It may be judged, I say, that when a congregation join vocally together in putting up their addresses to Almighty God, they then most perfectly adopt the apostolical admonition, and "glorify God," not only "with one mind," but also "with one mouth."

It is upon this principle, that the provisions for publick worship, as regulated by the united Church of England and Ireland, have been constructed. The Church has not only provided a form of prayer, to be the consistent and undeviating vehicle of the

concord of sentiment which she inculcates upon her members, but she also calls upon all her members to take an active part in the celebration of that form. Whilst she directs her ministers to lead and guide the people in their devotions, she calls upon the people likewise to follow or accompany her ministers, not with their hearts only, but with their voices; not only with their minds, but with their mouths.

No one, who is but in a very slight degree acquainted with our Book of Common Prayer, can be ignorant that such are the provisions of the Church. Yet it may be not superfluous, if some examples of these provisions be laid distinctly before you on the present occasion: and accordingly I proceed to specify, that in the exhortation, at the commencement of the service, the minister, by order of the Church, “prays and beseeches, *as many as are here present*, to accompany him with a pure heart, and *humble voice*, unto the throne of the heavenly grace, *saying after him*.” Then follows, as the Rubrick describes it, “a General Confession, *to be said of the whole congregation* after the minister, all kneeling.” After the Absolution, which is “to be pronounced by the priest alone,” the Rubrick directs, “*The people shall answer* here, and at the end of all other prayers, Amen.” The direction follows, “Then the minister shall kneel, and say the Lord’s Prayer with an audible voice;

*the people also kneeling, and repeating it with him,* both here, and wheresoever else it is used in Divine service." In the short petitions and the doxology which ensue, the minister is directed to begin, and the "answer" is as plainly intended for the people: the same remark applies to the Psalms, when they are "said" and not "sung." The suffrages after the Creed, and the entire Litany, are manifestly constructed upon the same principle. The Creeds are appointed to be "sung or said by the minister and *the people, standing.*" On the rehearsal of the Ten Commandments by the priest, in the Communion service, it is ordered, that "*the people, still kneeling, shall, after every commandment, ask God* mercy for their transgression thereof for the time past, and grace to keep the same for the time to come." In all these rubrics, or directions, by which the Church regulates the publick worship of her members, and more if necessary might be added, she expressly calls upon all the people, or the congregation at large, to share vocally, as well as mentally, in the devotions of the minister.

II. But whatever be the directions of the Church in this behalf, it is notorious that in many congregations they are very partially observed, in others they are altogether slighted. And yet the provisions of the Church are good in themselves; and

are entitled on many accounts to the observance of her members.

1. I say the provisions of the Church, by which she requires her congregations to join with the minister vocally as well as mentally in her services, "with one mouth" as well as "with one mind," are entitled to the observance of her members. And this they are, in the first place, by REASON OF THE AUTHORITY by which they are enacted. For, as the twentieth Article asserts, "the Church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies:" and what the Church hath power and sees reason to decree, those, who recognize her authority, are bound to observe and practise. With any conscientious, reasonable, and considerate member of the Church, I should be willing to place the matter upon this simple footing. And I should have no doubt, that any such member, after having once had his mind directed expressly to the subject, and having weighed the subject with due deliberation, would comply with the injunction of the Church in the particular before us, as well as in all other particulars relating to the performance of publick worship, for this reason; namely, because the Church has enjoined it.

2. I am here obviously supposing, that the particulars, required by the Church to be observed by her members, are not unlawful in themselves; not contrary to the revealed will of God. If they

were, the authority of the Church would be superseded by a higher authority, and would be null and void. And thus the Article, which asserts, as before noticed, “the power of the Church to decree rites and ceremonies,” annexes this condition; “And yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing, that is contrary to God’s word written.” For example, if the Church were to ordain, that divine worship should be offered by her congregations to any other object than Almighty God, or through any other mediator than the Lord Jesus Christ, she would ordain that which is “contrary to God’s word written;” she would do that which it is not lawful for her to do; and she would in consequence forfeit her title to the observance of her members. Is there then any thing “contrary to God’s word written,” in the ordinances of the Church, whereby she regulates the devotions of her people, and calls upon them, one and all, to unite with her ministers, vocally as well as mentally, in the worship of God?

The answer to this question is, I think, plain, and may be brief. The ordinances of the Church in this respect are by no means contrary to God’s word written. Rather they are in entire accordance with that word; and they derive from it countenance at least and sanction, if they do not actually rest on it for support. I say, the ordinances of the Church, in requiring all her mem-

bers to join vocally in divine worship, are NOT CONTRARY TO THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD. The proof of this negative will hardly be demanded. I may be contented with remarking in pursuance of it, that the only scripture which I know, as capable of being perverted into a prohibition of the congregation bearing a part in the service, namely, a passage in the fourteenth chapter of St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, which forbids "women to speak in the church," has really no such signification, as to prohibit them from joining in the service; but means no more than to forbid their giving instruction, or entering into questions or disputation in the church: and that my own acquaintance with the Bible does not furnish me with any other instance of disagreement between these ordinances of the Church, and the written word of God. I must leave therefore to any person, who may be disposed to ground his disobedience to the Church upon this plea, the task of adducing those passages of Scripture, whereby the plea can in his opinion be justified and maintained.

3. But I say besides, that these provisions of the Church are rather IN STRICT ACCORDANCE WITH THE WORD OF GOD; and derive from it countenance at least and sanction, if they do not rest upon it for support.

Now the provisions by which the people are

directed to take part in the service of the Church, may be considered in a twofold view: partly, as relates to the joining of the voices of all the congregation together, of the people as well as of the minister; for instance, in the Confessions, the Lord's Prayer, the Creeds, and some of the doxologies: partly, as regards their answering the minister, as in the responses or suffrages after the Apostles' Creed, and at some other places of the service, in the ordinary doxology, in the Litany, in the petitions after each Commandment, and in the Amen at the end of every prayer. Of each of these practices the Scriptures will supply us with examples.

With respect to the whole congregation joining their voices together in the services of the Church, we have several scriptural examples for our warrant. Thus we find Moses and the children of Israel uniting their voices in singing praises to God, as recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus. Thus we find the Apostles and their disciples, as recorded in the fourth chapter of the Acts, uniting their voices in adoration and prayer: for "they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that therein is;" thence proceeding with an acknowledgment of his wisdom and overruling providence, an appeal to his justice, and a petition for his

grace. Thus, again, we find the blessed in heaven uniting their voices both in prayer and in praises to the Almighty: in prayer, for so it is related in the sixth chapter of the Revelation concerning “the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held;” that “they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” and in praises, for so it is related in the fifth chapter, “And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

Again, with respect to the answers returned by the people to the minister, of this practice also we have scriptural examples. The Israelites were commanded to do so in the 106th Psalm; where, after the conclusion of the prayers and praises of which the psalm consists, the injunction follows, “Let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the Lord.” And accordingly we find in the sixteenth chapter of the first book of Chronicles, “And all the people said Amen, and praised the Lord.” At the dedication of Solomon’s temple, as related in

the sixth and seventh chapters of the second book of Chronicles, after a description of the other ceremonies, which attended that solemn festival, specially of the offerings of the priests, is added an account of the part taken by the people; for “all the children of Israel,” we are told, “bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever.” And at the revival of the law after the Babylonish captivity, as we read in the eighth chapter of Nehemiah, when “Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, and blessed the Lord, the great God; all the people answered Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.” The language of the Apostle St. Paul shews, that this practice of answering Amen, which prevailed under the law, was not intended to be, nor in fact was, abolished by the Gospel. “Else,” saith he, in the fourteenth chapter of his Epistle to the Corinthians, reasoning upon the necessity of prayer being in a known tongue, “when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?” An argument, which assumes for its ground the fact, a fact which must have been generally prevalent, and notoriously known

to be so, that “the unlearned,” or the people at large, bore their part in the worship of the first Christian assemblies. Lastly, Isaiah represents the seraphim celebrating the glory of God in alternate strains, “And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory:” and throughout the book of Revelation, which repeatedly describes the adorations of the Church triumphant in heaven, the multitude and the elders are represented as calling upon each other to ascribe blessing to our God and to the Lamb, and as answering each other in successive Allelujahs: alluding, as there is good reason to believe, to the manner in which the Church militant was then in the habit of praising God on earth; and agreeing with the precept of St. Paul, in his third chapter to the Colossians, “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.”

In these various passages of Scripture, I think we perceive enough to countenance the Church in her provisions for publick worship; with respect both to those parts of the service, wherein all the congregation are directed, both minister and people, to join vocally in their devotions; and to those, wherein the people are directed to answer the minister by their responses: so that if they do not amount to an authority, whereon her prac-

tices may be said to rest, they at least afford a sanction for her practices, in the example of the Jewish Church under the special superintendence of God, of the Christian Church under the guidance of the inspired Apostles of Christ, and of the Church of the blessed angels and glorified saints in heaven. We conclude, then, that very far indeed from "ordaining any thing contrary to God's word written," the Church is acting in full accordance with that word, when she calls upon all who are present at her services, to "accompany their minister with a pure heart and humble voice to the throne of the heavenly grace;" and thus to glorify God, not only "with one mind," but also "with one mouth."

III. You will, I trust, have perceived, my brethren, from the foregoing observations, that the service, required by the Church of all her members, is a lawful and scriptural service. I would wish you further to perceive, that the same is "a REASONABLE SERVICE," and is recommended to your observance by its own value and importance.

1. First, the joining of the people vocally in the service is calculated to *fix and quicken the attention*, which is otherwise prone to wander from the subject of their devotions, or to sink into a state of forgetfulness and torpor. Where the whole of the service is uttered by the voice of

another, inattention to it is the probable consequence with the great proportion of those who ought to accompany it with their minds. But where each individual is sensible that he has his own share of active duty to perform, the very obligation of performing it keeps him attentive to his office. He will be watchful to perform his share of duty, when it shall come round to him: and he will be diligent in performing it when it comes round. I do not mean that the service of the lip will necessarily carry with it the service of the understanding: but I mean that the obligation of joining with the outward organ of speech is a probable mode of keeping the understanding vigilant and constant; of preventing it from relaxing into a state of repose and slumber, or from wandering to other topicks different from those with which it ought to be occupied in the house and during the service of God.

2. Again, the joining of the people vocally in the service is calculated to *animate their devotion*. It gives a grateful variety to the service: it precludes the languor which is apt to ensue from the long continuance of the same or the like performance: it is a mutual encouragement to the minister and the people to proceed with vigour in the discharge of their respective parts: and it spreads over a congregation at large that sympathetick fervour, which man, who is, by the ap-

pointment of Providence in the constitution of his nature, a social animal, naturally derives from being associated with others in the same occupation.

3. Further: the joining of the people vocally in the service gives to publick prayer its proper character of *an united, a common address* to the Almighty. It is an outward testimony of an inward agreement amongst the worshippers of God. That we must "agree" in our petitions, is a condition, upon which Christ hath promised that our petitions shall be heard and granted<sup>1</sup>. And, no doubt, inward agreement, the agreement of the heart and spirit, is the matter of prime importance for the procuring of such a blessing. But agreement in voice is a pledge and an earnest of agreement in spirit. It is an evident assurance that we pray "with one mind," when we pray "with one mouth :" nay, praying "with one mouth" is not only a testimony, but it is an occasion also, and a motive, of our praying "with one mind ;" if, as hath been already observed, we are thereby led to pray with a more fixed and lively attention, with a stronger and more fervent devotion.

IV. These remarks, which are suggested upon a *general view* of our subject, are calculated to re-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 19.

commend the provisions of the Church as constituting a “reasonable service.” But other remarks are suggested by a consideration of several *particulars* in those provisions. For each part of the service, in which the people are required to join vocally, has its own proper reason for the injunction. In adverting to some of these parts, whilst you will perceive additional motives for complying with the directions of the Church, you will also, I think, perceive that those directions are, for the most part, not arbitrary; but are founded on a judicious sense and discrimination of the purposes, for which the several departments of publick worship are designed.

1. The first part of publick worship, in which the people are required to join vocally, is *the general confession of sin*, which at the commencement of the service the whole congregation are directed to make, “after the minister, all kneeling.” And surely we need not look far, for the reason and the fitness of this provision of the Church. For what can be more fit, what more reasonable, than that every individual, who feels himself to be a sinner, should, with all humility, confess himself to Almighty God, and with his own lips acknowledge himself to be so; than that every individual, who feels the necessity of God’s mercy in Christ Jesus, should, with his own lips, avow his sense of that necessity, and implore that mercy for Christ’s sake;

as an introduction to the various acts of prayer, and praise, and profession of faith, and thanksgiving, which are to compose his ensuing devotions? "Could there be any thing," demands the judicious Hooker, "Could there be any thing devised better, than that we all, at our first access unto God by prayer, should acknowledge meekly our sins, and that not only in heart, but with tongue: all which are present being made ear-witnesses even of every man's distinct and deliberate assent unto each particular branch of a common indictment drawn against ourselves? How were it possible that the Church should any way else with such ease and certainty provide, that none of her children may, as Adam, dissemble that wretchedness, the penitent confession whereof is so necessary a preamble especially to common prayer<sup>1</sup>?"

2. The next particular of publick worship, in which the people are required to join vocally with the minister, is the *Lord's Prayer*: a prayer, in which they are required to join, and to repeat it with the minister, "both here, and wheresoever else it is used in Divine service." Now this prayer, as its name imports, was taught us by our Lord Himself, and by Him commanded to be used by us. Most fitly therefore has it been at all times used by the Church of Christ, as an evidence of

<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastical Polity, B. v. 36.

her obedience to Him, her Lord and Master: and most fitly has the Church appointed, that every member of her body should unite in using it; because every individual member thereby testifies his own particular sense of that honour and obedience, which he owes in his own person to the Author and Finisher of his faith. At the same time in the use of this prayer every individual may be regarded as testifying his sense of that mutual relation in which we all stand to each other, and as expressing his charity and brotherly love to others, when he unites with them in addressing himself to the Almighty, under the special appellation of "Our Father," the one parent and preserver of all. And, that I may again adopt the language of the incomparable Author of the Ecclesiastical Polity, whose words I just now cited, "what more fit and convenient than this, that we should, in hatred of all heresies, factions, and schisms, the pastor as a leader, the people as willing followers of him step by step, declare openly ourselves united as brethren in one, by offering up with all our hearts and tongues that most effectual supplication, wherein He, unto whom we offer it, hath Himself not only comprehended all our necessities, but in such sort also framed every petition, as might most naturally serve for many, and doth, though not always require, yet always import, a multitude of speakers together?"

3. Again: in the *psalms*, and *hymns*, and *doxologies*, there is an evident propriety in admitting the people to bear their part, arising out of the pleasure which every ingenuous mind experiences in expressing its own sentiments of gratitude to its benefactor, and in making its own lips the instruments of praise. To this department of the service, therefore, the Church not only admits the people to bear part, but she also directs them to pledge themselves to perform it in those interlocutory sentences, which pass between the minister and the people after the Lord's Prayer." "O Lord, open thou our lips," is the petition of the minister; to which the people are directed to answer, "And our mouth shall shew forth thy praise." And again, "Praise ye the Lord," to which the people are directed to express their assent by answering, "The Lord's name be praised." Then follows the invitational psalm, "O come let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving: and shew ourselves glad in him with psalms." Concerning which it is obvious to remark, how completely both this mutual invitation and all the preliminary sentences are rendered nugatory and absurd, when during the psalms, which follow, the congregation is as silent as if a seal were placed upon their lips; and none of their voices are heard to

testify to the Lord and to their brethren the feelings of grateful and joyful hearts.

4. Again: in the *Creeds* we perceive a further instance of the propriety of the people joining with their minister vocally in the publick service. Faith being the foundation of all religion, and of all religious worship, the Church has seen fit to order, that a profession of faith should be constantly made by her members assembled for publick worship, as declaring their agreement in those principles of religion, upon which their agreement in worship must be established. Nor can any thing be more reasonable, than that all should concur in making open profession of their faith, and in thus giving to each other an assurance of their unanimous concurrence in this essential of religion. But there is a peculiarity to be observed in the language of the Creeds, which gives a further and peculiar propriety to the utterance of it by each individual with his own lips. I mean, that the Creeds are composed, not in the plural, but in the singular number: the form of the composition is not "*We* believe;" but it is, "*I* believe in God," and so on through the whole of the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds. Of this construction it is the manifest intention, that every individual should make profession to the Church and to his brother Christians of his own faith in his own name. And he who omits to

make such profession for himself, as there is no provision of the Church which can by any rational interpretation be understood as making the like profession for him, so he must, I suppose, be understood as declining to make profession of his faith at all.

5. Again: there are other parts of the service, in which the people are required to bear their part vocally, wherein the propriety of their taking part is apparent, not only from the character of the act of devotion itself, but from a consideration of the manner in which the particular service is constructed. Of all the supplicatory exercises of the Church there is none more excellent than the *Litany*: none more distinguished by the deep devotion of its sentiments, and the corresponding earnestness of its language: none therefore more recommended by its intrinsick value to the concurrence of the minister and the people both in heart and in voice. But moreover almost the whole of that most impressive composition is constructed upon the principle of such concurrence: so that if the minister alone perform his part, and the people omit to perform theirs, hardly a petition or supplication in it is complete. The same observation applies in a considerable degree to other parts of the service, especially the *responses*, as they are commonly called from the versicles or short petitions provided for the people, in answer

to the sentences allotted to the minister; whose part is always prescribed on the supposition of the answer being given by the people, and is in consequence frequently incomplete without it. Thus also we may observe with respect to the *petitions at the close of each commandment* in the Communion Service, that fit and requisite as they are to be uttered on their own account, as petitions for mercy and grace, for mercy in consequence of our acknowledged transgressions of the Divine law in time past, and for grace that we may be enabled to keep the same for the time to come, they ought also to be uttered on account of the interruption, which must otherwise be occasioned in the service, whilst the minister suspends his voice in the execution of his office, and pauses in vain for the interval to be supplied by the united voices of the people.

6. To these particular provisions of the Church for the joining of the people vocally in publick worship, I shall add only that other provision, by which they are required to answer *Amen* at the end of every prayer, which is to be said by the minister alone. Of this provision, again, the reason, I think, is obvious and unquestionable. The minister is the appointed intercessor between God and the people; and consequently it is his office to offer up prayers in their name and on their behalf. But it is fit that they should give their

mark and affix as it were their seal, to the act of their minister: and thereby make the act, not ~~like~~ ~~like~~ ~~like~~ ~~like~~ theirs. This is the intention of the Church in prescribing the use of the Amen for the people. By using it they accordingly signify, that they approve of and adopt the language of the minister: and as it is only by such use of it that they give any outward sensible proof of such their assent and approbation, it is obviously fit, that if they would be considered as partakers in the prayers of the Church, they should pursue this method of partaking in them.

7. With these reasons for the people uniting vocally in publick worship, all of which have reference to ourselves who are engaged in the offices of worship, I would combine one other reason, certainly not inferior to any of the preceding, rather indeed superior to them all, on account of the reference which it bears to the great Being, who is the object of our worship. Infinitely raised as that Being is in his own nature above all degrees of excellence, he has nevertheless vouchsafed to assure us, that he is *honoured by the services of his creatures*: and, if honoured at all, surely that honour must be augmented, in proportion to the open and avowed demonstrations of that inward feeling, by which our services should be actuated. This principle appears to be distinctly recognized by our blessed Lord himself,

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven<sup>1</sup>." For the satisfaction of our heavenly Father Himself indeed it might suffice for us to worship Him in secret: but, for the magnifying of his name in the world, it is necessary that we adore Him also in the assemblies of his people; and that we adore Him in such a manner, as to testify most unequivocally to others our own sense of the holiness and reverence of his name. Thus it is that the heavenly hosts are represented, as calling on one another to pour forth the language of adoration, and giving with a loud voice glory to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever: nor can any better mode be devised on earth for glory to be given, than by the union of a great assembly in the outward acts of penitence and prayer, of faith and confidence, of praise, and joy, and thanksgiving, to the supreme Father and Benefactor of all.

V. For such reasons as have now been stated, I conceive that it is incumbent on the members of the Church to take their part, vocally as well as mentally, in the services which the Church has provided: because the Church has so appointed; because her appointment is not contrary, but agree-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 16.

able, to Scripture; because the services, appointed by her, are reasonable services, considered whether generally or particularly, with reference both to God and to ourselves. I am aware indeed that in some congregations, wherein the people are negligent of their office, a sort of vague notion is apt to prevail, that the silence of the congregation is supplied by the *parish clerk*: a notion, so fond and preposterous, that I can hardly believe it to be really entertained by any one, who has given to the subject any serious consideration. Yet a few brief remarks upon it may be not without their use.

1. I observe then that such supply *could not have been in the contemplation of the Church*, and cannot be sufficient to meet her provisions. For it is remarkable, that no such officer as a parish clerk is noticed in any one of her directions concerning the manner of celebrating Divine worship. The Rubrick, indeed, after the Apostles' Creed, directs, that "then the minister, *clerks*, and people shall say the Lord's Prayer with a loud voice." But the "*clerks*," there intended, are by no means the officers now known amongst us as parish clerks: they were clerks in holy orders, who might perhaps be present at the service, and who were then to join with the officiating minister in this part of the service: but still to join in such a manner, as not to supersede the people, who are also expressly

appointed to join with them in the same service. I add, that there is not any shadow of a provision throughout the Book of Common Prayer, whereby the congregation are warranted in suffering to devolve upon any individual those portions of the service, in which they are instructed to take part vocally themselves.

2. Nor is the substitution of the parish clerk calculated to answer *those good purposes*, which, on a *general* view, we have seen to result from the congregation joining vocally in the service. It is calculated neither to fix and quicken the attention of the people, nor to animate their devotion ; nor to give to publick worship that character by which it should be distinguished as an united address to God from all the members of the congregation. Whilst the clerk is performing the people's duty, the people themselves are left at liberty to be as inattentive and as indevout as they please : at the same time how utterly at variance the sort of dialogue, which sometimes passes between the minister and the parish clerk, is with every idea of congregational worship, with every idea of the united devotions of a great assembly, lifting up their voice with one accord in honour of the Almighty, must be obvious to the perception of the most casual observer.

3. Nor, again, is the substitution of such an individual at all calculated to meet those *special con-*

*siderations*, which give peculiar propriety to the union of the congregation in the several parts of Divine worship. That he should concur with the rest of the congregation in making confession of his own sins, in testifying his own obedience to his Saviour, in putting up his own praises of God, in making profession of his own belief, and in giving his own assent and confirmation to the prayers of the minister, uttered on behalf of the whole congregation, is a duty which belongs to him in common with every other member of the congregation. And perhaps there may be no impropriety, if his tone of voice be somewhat more elevated, and his enunciation somewhat more distinctly marked than that of the people in general. Still he is but one of the congregation: and he has no authority whatsoever, he is not invested with an office or a character which confers upon him authority, to be the instrument of presenting the wants and desires of others to the throne of the heavenly grace; or to confess sin, to petition for mercy, to utter praises, to declare belief, and to give assent to prayer, in any other name than in his own.

VI. Having set aside then this fancied expedient, I recur to my former conclusion; and I repeat, that for the reasons previously stated it is incumbent on the members of the Church to take

their part vocally, as well as mentally, in the services which the Church has provided. But indeed, my brethren, it is not merely as a DUTY that I would impress this practice upon your observance, but as an important and valuable PRIVILEGE : a privilege, which in a great degree characterises our pure and reformed part of the holy Catholick and Apostolick Church of Christ.

From various passages in the early ecclesiastical writers, and from specimens of ancient liturgies which have been transmitted to us, we have good reason to be persuaded, that the practice of the people joining vocally with the minister in their devotions, and answering him in alternate sentences, as well as of their expressing their assent to his prayers by an unanimous Amen, was established at a very early period in the Christian Church ; probably at a period coeval with the Apostles themselves. This practice fell into disuse under the domination of the Romish Church, from what should seem to be an obvious cause ; for the congregation at large would evidently be precluded from taking part in a service, performed in a language with which they were not acquainted. The practice, reasonable as it appeared to be, and agreeable to Scripture precedents, was revived by the Church of England at the Reformation ; although not approved of by protestant dissenters, any more than by some of those of the Romish

Church: and it has ever since continued to form a conspicuous feature in the celebration of Divine worship in that part of the Church of Christ, established by the good Providence of God in England and Ireland.

In this practice then, whereby our Church is distinguished, let me exhort you, my brethren, as conscientious and consistent members of that Church, cordially to unite, both in discharge of a solemn *duty*, and in the exercise of a valuable *privilege*. In pursuance of this let me pray and beseech you, as your minister, by order of the Church, at the commencement of Divine Service, never fails to "pray and beseech you, as many as are here present, to accompany him," not only "with a pure heart," but also "with an humble voice, unto the throne of the heavenly grace." And, accordingly, let me entreat you to repeat, in your own persons and with your own lips, the several parts of the Service, which the Church invites and instructs you to repeat: the confessions, in lowly acknowledgment of your own sins and unworthiness, and of your reliance on the mercy of Almighty God through Jesus Christ our Lord; the Lord's Prayer, in grateful testimony of your own obedience to your Saviour, and of your communion with your brethren; the psalms and doxologies, in attestation of your own thankfulness to God; the creeds, in declaration and confirmation of your Christian

faith; the responses in pursuance and completion of the petitions of your minister; and the final Amen, in which you are required to answer all his prayers in your behalf, in ratification upon your own part of every request that he has offered for you, and in attestation that these requests are really and in sincerity your own.

Whatever the Church can do for the glory of God and for the spiritual welfare of her children, she has done with all fidelity, not only by the appointment of a liturgy, second to no human composition in the purity of its sentiments, the beauty and simplicity of its language, and the happy arrangement and adaptation of its several parts; but also by the distribution of the various provisions of her liturgy amongst her members of the clergy and of the laity, in such a manner as to contribute most effectually to the purposes of publick worship by the edification of all those who partake in it. What remains, in order to render these her provisions effectual, is the province of her ministers and of the other members of the Church. To the minister it belongs to lead his congregation in their addresses to Almighty God, with solemnity and gravity and deliberation, with reverence and devotion, with fervency of spirit and earnestness of manner: to the congregation it belongs to "accompany or follow their minister with a pure heart and with a humble voice;" to unite in his ad-

dresses "with one mind;" and to testify their unity of mind, wherever the Church so appoints for them, by uniting also "with one mouth." It is from such conduct as this, that we have reason to promise ourselves that we shall most effectually promote the purposes of publick worship in the communion of our scriptural and apostolical Church. But, if our conduct be not such as this, I cannot think that we act in a manner which becomes us, as members of the Church to which we profess to belong; or, as Christians, deeply anxious to avail themselves of all the opportunities which they enjoy, for promoting their own spiritual welfare and the glory of Almighty God.

VII. To be the means, by God's good blessing, of administering a corrective to this evil, for on the principles now submitted to your thoughts an evil it must be considered; to be the means, I say, if it please God, of correcting the evil complained of, so far as it may prevail in the present congregation, has been my object in this Discourse. If I shall have succeeded in engaging your attention to the subject, my first point will have been secured: and, perhaps, I may be permitted to request, that your attention may not be relaxed immediately on your departure from this place, but that you will resume and follow up in your

own minds the train of reflexion which has been now submitted to them.

Your attention being thus engaged, and fixed to a deliberate survey of the subject, I would hope that further success might ensue from this attempt in the counteraction of the causes, to which perhaps the great prevalence of the evil, when it does prevail, is to be attributed; by rousing the indifferent, by animating the indolent, by establishing the doubtful, by encouraging the timid, especially by giving information to some who may have been beforehand not fully instructed upon the subject, and by opening new views of it to others, who may have been prevented by previous prepossessions, by the example of their neighbours, and by early and long-continued habit, from judging of it aright.

The result of the whole I would further hope might be, a conviction of the correctness of the sentiments thus submitted to him, in the mind of every pious, conscientious, and considerate member of the Church: and a consequent resolution to act conformably to his profession, by a constant union with his brethren in those services which the Church prescribes to him, for the glory of God, and for his own present and future good. Wherever this process could take effect amongst us, the consequence would be a general improvement in our celebration of Divine worship. And thus our

Liturgy would become indeed, according to its denomination and its intent, a Book of Common Prayer: our congregations would recover, where they have lost, and more thoroughly establish where they now but partially maintain, the character of brethren “assembled and met together, to render thanks for the great benefits that they have received at the hands of God, to set forth his most worthy praise, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul.” And the Church, thus exhibiting in her congregations the good and joyful spectacle of minister and people acting together in unity, and accompanying one another to the throne of the heavenly grace, would in her collective capacity more completely “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness<sup>1</sup>,” and give to all men a more sensible evidence, that “God is in her of a truth<sup>2</sup>. ”

Brethren, I shall conclude, as I began, by beseeching you to “suffer the word of exhortation<sup>3</sup>,” which “in simplicity, and,” as I trust, “in godly sincerity<sup>4</sup>,” I have now submitted to your thoughts. Whoever may “plant,” and whoever may “water,” it is God, we know, “who giveth the increase<sup>5</sup>. ” That the word, which we preach unto you, may be blessed to his glory, and to your edification,

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xcvi. 9.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. xiii. 22.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. i. 12.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 7.

we humbly supplicate therefore the Divine grace : praying, in the language of the Apostle in my text, that “the God of patience and consolation may grant you to be likeminded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus : that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

O Almighty God, who hast built thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone ; Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto thee : and that, as there is but one Body and one Spirit, and one Hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may henceforth be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify Thee ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> St. Simon and St. Jude ; and the Sovereign's Accession.

## DISCOURSE XVII.

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### THE CHURCH'S PUBLICK WORSHIP, DUTY OF BEING PRESENT AT ITS COMMENCEMENT.

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PSALM lxxxiv. 1, 2.

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord : my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

IT has been always the practice with those, who believe in God, to meet together at certain times and seasons, for the purpose of uniting together in his worship. The history of the Jewish Church from its establishment to its dissolution, and the history of the Christian Church from its first foundation down to the present hour, concur in giving evidence to the fact. That such meetings are agreeable to Almighty God we know, because in the revelation of his will contained in the holy Scriptures, we find that they are especially appointed by Him ; that the blessing of his Divine

visitation and peculiar favour is signally promised to them ; that his most faithful servants have been uniformly distinguished for their diligent attendance on them ; and have been accordingly selected by the Holy Spirit in his word as subjects of the Divine commendation. Under the law, it was appointed for the children of Israel to assemble at the tabernacle of the congregation, there to be “met and to be communed with by the Lord<sup>1.</sup>” Under the Gospel, our blessed Lord has in like manner promised, that He will be “in the midst of them, who are gathered together in his name<sup>2.</sup>;” and He gave a pledge and earnest of the accomplishment of his promise by sending down his Holy Spirit upon his Apostles, when “they were all with one accord in one place<sup>3.</sup>” The Apostles accordingly made it their practice, as it had been the custom of their Lord and Master, Himself the pattern of all righteousness, to “continue daily with one accord in the temple;” and to “break bread,” or celebrate the holy Communion, in their own special places of Christian worship : and it was esteemed a subject, not unworthy of Apostolical exhortation, that men should unite in community of religious exercises, and “not forsake the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some was<sup>4.</sup>”

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxv. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xviii. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Acts ii. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. x. 25.

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Now for this practice of men assembling together for the purpose of uniting in religious worship, I apprehend that two leading reasons may be assigned : one, that by “ letting our light shine before men” in the various offices of devotion, and by performing in their sight the good works of piety and faith in God, we give the Lord the honour due unto his name, and so incite them to “ glorify our Father, which is in heaven<sup>1</sup>;” the other, that by a zealous co-operation in our addresses to the throne of grace, both our prayers are more effectual in calling down a blessing from the Almighty ; and also we “ provoke<sup>2</sup> ” each other to imitation, and contribute to “ edify one another<sup>3</sup>;” so that every man conduces more to his own spiritual improvement, and at the same time to that of his brethren.

If I am right in assigning these two reasons, namely, the promotion of God’s glory, and of man’s spiritual improvement, as the reasons for which publick worship has been established and practised ; it will follow, I think, that these supply a proper criterion for judging, whether any particular in the performance of such worship is right or wrong. So that if any particular shall appear, on due examination, to promote God’s glory, and our own and our brethren’s spiritual welfare; we may be satisfied

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 16.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. ix. 2.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Thess. v. 11.

of its being agreeable to the general purpose for which publick worship was appointed, and may begin or continue to practise it with a safe and approving conscience. But if on the other hand we shall find any particular, not conducive to God's honour, or not conducive to our own or our brethren's spiritual improvement, and still more if we shall find such a particular manifestly injurious to both, we may then, I think, be satisfied, that the particular in question, not being agreeable to the general purposes of publick worship, cannot be right, must be wrong ; and therefore ought to be carefully avoided, if it has not been before adopted, or, if it has, then to be forthwith laid aside.

It will not be supposed, that I have been making the foregoing observations without an eye to some particular practice in connection with our publick worship, which I consider either questionable or faulty. I allude certainly to one, which I consider by no means questionable, but as self-evidently and decidedly wrong. It prevails in a greater or less degree in most churches : in this, as in many others, it prevails to a considerable degree. I am not sure, but you are already aware of the practice to which I point : but I am sure, that if you are aware of it, there is not one serious person in this or in any other congregation, not one person, who is really concerned for God's honour, and for his own and his brethren's

welfare, but will join me in condemning the practice, although he may be thereby compelled to pass sentence upon himself. I speak of the practice of not entering the church and joining the congregation, until after Divine service has been begun: a practice, of which you must be convinced that in my opinion it is by no means a light and trifling matter, seeing that I judge it to require a solemn remonstrance from the pulpit: a practice, which may indeed be pronounced extremely reprehensible, on the grounds that have now been suggested; namely, as being prejudicial to the honour of God, and to the good of man. Upon these points I propose at present to enlarge; and in order to your full agreement with me in the judgment which I have given, I have only, I am persuaded, to intreat your serious and disinterested attention to the following reflexions. "I speak as to wise men: judge ye what I say."

I. First, then: it appears to me that the practice of not joining the congregation, until after the commencement of Divine service, shows some want of reverence to God, and zeal in his service, and is of course derogatory to his honour. "Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house?" was the pathetick expostulation addressed by king David to his brethren, the elders of Judah; "seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king,

even to his house<sup>1.</sup>" Why are ye the last, we may demand, to pay your service to the King of kings, seeing the speech of all Israel is already offered up to Him in prayers from his house? The forwardness and alacrity, with which a service is performed, greatly enhances the value of the service itself: it is a proof that the service comes willingly and from the heart. Whereas he who is backward in the performance of an office, and defers it, and postpones it, and withholds it to the last moment, gives some reason for supposing that it would be more agreeable to his inclination not to perform it at all. Therefore the Psalmist beseeches the Lord to be pleased with "the free will offerings of the mouth<sup>2.</sup>"; and the Apostle exhorts us in affairs of bounty, what is equally applicable to matters of religion, to "give not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver<sup>3.</sup>" It is by such offerings as these that God is honoured: offerings, which testify by the cheerfulness and earnestness with which they are paid, that they proceed from voluntary subjects, from faithful and attached servants, from affectionate children; and which at the same time bear honourable testimony to the excellence of the merciful Sovereign, the bountiful Master, and the tender Parent, in whose service they are paid.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. xix. 11.<sup>2</sup> Psalm cxix. 108.<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. ix. 7.

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How are the perfections of God extolled (as far as they can be extolled by man) in those devout hymns of the royal Psalmist! and what restless and indefatigable activity does that sweet singer of Israel display in performing the pious offices of devotion! What eagerness to be present in the tabernacle of the congregation! what an earnest desire and longing to appear in the presence of the Lord! “O, how amiable are thy dwellings, thou Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young; even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee!” And again; “O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is<sup>1</sup>. ” And again, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God<sup>2</sup>? ” If the zeal and animation of these glowing effusions of a pious heart reflect honour (and who will deny that, speaking humanly, they do

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxiii. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xlvi. 1, 2.

reflect honour?) upon the glorious Being, whose sanctuary the Psalmist was so impatient to visit and frequent; what judgment must be formed of our backwardness and sloth in resorting to the courts of that more spiritual Zion, which we possess; courts, more “goodly than the tents of Jacob,” and more amiable than “the tabernacles of Israel?”

But there are three particular points of view (besides the general one in which I have just considered it), wherein the practice before us may appear more especially to rob the Lord of “the honour due unto his name.” We glorify God in various ways; amongst others, as the Scriptures teach us, in the three following. We glorify Him by an humble acknowledgment and confession of our own vileness and wickedness: according to that admonition of Joshua to Achan, “My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him<sup>1</sup>. ” We glorify Him, again, by a steadfast belief in God’s promises, and a patient expectation and reliance upon the performance of them: agreeably to what was said by St. Paul of Abraham, “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God<sup>2</sup>. ” Thirdly, we glorify

<sup>1</sup> Josh. vii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. iv. 20.

Him, by a publick return of thanks and praise for blessings whether general or particular: as God teaches us in the fiftieth Psalm, “Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me:” and as our blessed Saviour described the thanksgiving of the leper who was cleansed, by the term of “giving glory to God<sup>1</sup>. ”

Upon the ground of these three specifick instances, wherein the Scriptures inform us that we “glorify God,” I would suggest three heads of reflexion to those among you, whose minds may not perhaps have been seriously employed on the subject.

1. At a very early period of the Church Service, indeed the first part of the service, in which the people are directed to unite, we have “a General Confession, to be said of the whole congregation after the minister;” a confession, breathing throughout those sentiments of humility and self-abasement, which become “us miserable offenders,” petitioning for “mercy from our most merciful Father, for the sake of Christ Jesu, our Lord:” a confession, by which, if by any human composition, we may be well said to give glory to our Almighty and most merciful Father, to whom it is addressed. Do you, permit me to ask; do you, if any such be here present, who habitually absent yourselves from this confession, give the Lord the honour due unto his

<sup>1</sup> Luke xvii. 18.

name; that honour, to which He is intitled from a lowly acknowledgment of your sins?

2. The part of the service, which succeeds in order, is “the Absolution or Remission of sins, to be pronounced by the priest,” who declares with authority and by commission from Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that “He, the same Almighty God, pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel.” Now, if they, who faithfully believing this authoritative declaration of the promises of God, and confidently expecting their accomplishment, listen to it and receive it with due humility, do give thereby “glory to God” (according to the Apostle’s testimony concerning faithful Abraham); what is to be said of such persons, as habitually absenting themselves from the absolution pronounced by him, to whom God hath committed the “ministry of reconciliation,” show thereby that they entertain a very questionable regard, if not for the promise, at least for the ordinance, of God, as the appointed channel whereby the promise is to be conveyed?

3. The Absolution is followed by the Lord’s Prayer, of which I would observe in passing, that although it is repeated more than once in the course of the service, yet this is the only place in which the doxology at the conclusion is introduced, wherein we ascribe “the kingdom, the power, and

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the glory," to our Heavenly Father. This prayer is followed by some of the Psalms of David; in which the minister and the congregation, having previously called upon the Lord to "open their lips, that their mouth may show forth his praise," and having mutually encouraged each other to unite in praising the Lord, proceed to celebrate his praises in the most divine hymns of glory and thanksgiving, which ever proceeded from a human mouth, and which the Lord himself inspired. Here again there is another specifick opportunity of uniting with the congregation in giving glory to God: and here again I can but repeat the former inquiry concerning the character of a practice, which deprives the Almighty of a portion of that honour, for which the publick worship of Him was appointed.

For the foregoing reasons it appears to me, that the practice of not uniting with the congregation in the early parts of the Church service is injurious to the honour of God: generally, because such backwardness is an indication of the heart being not zealous and sincere in his cause; more particularly, because by occasioning the parties to be absent from one, or more, or all of those portions which I have specified as occurring towards the commencement of our service, it diminishes that glory which severally arises to Him from a

due performance of each of those portions in its turn. To which I might add, if more be necessary, the disturbance and confusion, occasioned by the succession of new comers, in the worship of God: and the interruption of that decency and good order, of that gravity and solemnity, which the reason of the thing, as well as holy Scripture, teaches us ought to prevail in all cases which concern religion and the performance of our duties to the Almighty.

II. This leads me to notice the practice in question in its relation to men: and here I would first suggest it to your thoughts, whether it be not injurious to your brethren. On serious and impartial reflection perhaps you will concur with me in thinking that it is so, and that on more than one account.

1. It is, I apprehend, injurious to your brethren as it is an hindrance to their devotions. I need hardly remind you, how light and volatile is the mind of man! How difficult is the task of fixing it in prayer and supplication to God, and of retaining it in that employment, when once it seems to be fixed! How trifling and insignificant a cause is sufficient to interrupt its devotions, and to recal it from heavenly musings to thoughts that grovel upon the earth! I need not enlarge on this particular; nor dwell upon what must be ob-

vious to the reflection of every one, namely, the interruption which the practice under consideration must of necessity occasion, by exciting the curiosity of the more young and careless, by distracting the attention of those, who have not a full command of their thoughts, and by occasionally disturbing not the minds only, but the persons, of even the most serious and devout. To a question proposed to a late pious and very estimable person, "why are you so particular in coming to church always before the commencement of the service?" the answer is said to have been returned to this effect, "For this among other reasons, because it is part of my religion, not to disturb the devotions of others." It will be sufficient for me thus to have hinted at the inconveniences, caused to others by those who are careless about the time of their joining the congregation: nor may it be necessary for me to point out more strongly the impropriety of a custom, which constantly and necessarily leads to such consequences as these.

2. But further it is injurious to your brethren; not only as it hinders the devotion of those who do not, but as it is an example and encouragement to those who do, or are disposed to do, the same. Here again I need hardly remind you, how prone we all are to follow others, and that much more readily to do evil, than to do good. If you are only on a level with your neighbours, still it is

probable that there are some individuals in the same humble sphere with yourself, who will be swayed more or less by your example. But perhaps you are, from some cause or other, elevated above the crowd of your neighbours. Perhaps you are invested with an office, or otherwise hold a rank in life, which makes you an object of observation and imitation to others: perhaps your more fortunate circumstances, or your situation as the master or employer of others, confers on you considerable personal influence in giving a tone to their conduct and manners: the general propriety of your conduct perhaps, and your general character for maintaining a serious and religious deportment, causes you to be regarded among your acquaintance as a conscientious and therefore an exemplary man: or, if none of all these is the case, still perhaps you are the parent of a family, and in that capacity have a natural and rightful control by example, as well as by precept, over the conduct of your children. In all these respects, (reflection perhaps will suggest others to your minds) but in all these several relations more especially, I apprehend that injury must be done to others by your falling in with the practice in question yourselves. Your example will undoubtedly operate, in a greater or less degree, to a greater or less extent, upon them: and if the practice be censurable, as, after what has been already said

about it in its relation to God, I presume to take for granted, it remains for you to consider whether you are not acting injuriously to your brethren, by encouraging them in being backward and careless with respect to the offices of religion.

III. Thirdly; I have to propose it as a fit subject for your consideration, whether the practice, into which I am inquiring, is not injurious to yourselves. To me it appears evidently to be so.

1. It is injurious to yourselves, for it prevents you from acquiring that calmness and composure of mind, before the commencement of your devotions, which is requisite, in order either to prepare yourselves for performing them properly, or to present them as "a reasonable service, holy, acceptable unto God<sup>1</sup>." The advice of the wise man upon this subject may deserve your consideration: "Keep thy foot, when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God<sup>2</sup>." A few moments before the commencement of the publick service spent in secret prayer to Almighty God for his preventing and assisting grace, and in solemn meditation upon the great

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Eccl. v. 1, 2.

work of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, which draws us together, would (it is presumed) bring with them the advantage of rendering us all more fit for the holy office, in which we are about to engage: an advantage, which it is manifest cannot be well enjoyed by those, who do not join the congregation, until after the publick service has commenced. Such persons may indeed abstract themselves for a short time from the prayers of the congregation, to offer their private petitions to the throne of grace: but that, not, I apprehend, with full effect, nor with full propriety; nor without losing some part of the benefit to be derived from their coming, and which indeed is understood to be the purpose for which they come.

2. For, secondly, the practice under examination is injurious to yourselves, as it prevents you from sharing in some of the prescribed service of the Church. That service is composed with such fervent and discreet piety, and it is altogether and in all its parts so conducive to our spiritual edification; that there is no part, from which we can prudently absent ourselves; none, from which, if rightly engaged in, we may not trust that we shall be visited with a blessing. The Sentences, selected from Scripture, at the opening; the truly scriptural Exhortation, which ensues; the General Confession, the Absolution, the Lord's Prayer, and the judicious mixture and succession of supplications,

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praises, instruction, and giving of thanks, which compose our Liturgy; form, if I may so say, a body of devotional exercise, of which no part or member can without injury be lost: without injury, more especially to those who deprive themselves of the benefit designed by it.

I would instance particularly in those early parts of the service, the neglect of which I have already noticed as injurious to God's honour; and which I now wish to point out to you, as they are connected with your own spiritual welfare. You will not, I think, lightly decline joining in the confession of your sins to Almighty God, if you call to mind the important place, which an humble acknowledgment bears in the work of repentance; and reflect upon the words of David, "I will acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine unrighteousness have I not hid. I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord; and so thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin<sup>1</sup>." Nor will you wilfully disregard the voice of God's minister, "declaring and pronouncing to his people, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their sins;" when you consider it to be a seal of pardon applied by Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the consciences of "all them, that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel;" accord-

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xxxii. 5.

ing to that declaration of Christ to his Apostles, and through them to their successors in the ministry, “ Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained<sup>1</sup>. ” Nor will you treat it as a matter of indifference, whether or not you bear your part in returning thanks and praises to God with the congregation ; if you reflect on the testimony of God Himself by the mouth of his Prophet, “ Whoso offereth me praise, glorifieth me ; and to him that ordereth his conversation right will I show the salvation of God<sup>2</sup>. ”

In a word, and to close this branch of the subject with one general remark, if the backwardness complained of be injurious to God’s honour, it must be injurious to yourselves. For it is the declaration of God Himself, a declaration, which was dreadfully verified in the case of Him to whom it was uttered, and which will doubtless be at some time verified in the case of all those to whom it shall be applicable ; “ them that honour me I will honour ; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed<sup>3</sup>. ”

3. Lastly, if the practice before us is injurious to your brethren, in that respect also it is injurious to yourselves. We are assured, that “ they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm l. 23.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 30.

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stars for ever and ever<sup>1</sup>." On the contrary, if we obstruct the progress of others in the paths of righteousness, or if we encourage the carelessness of those, who are indifferent about entering or proceeding on them, "sin lieth at the door." St. Paul cautions the Corinthians to "take heed, lest by any means their liberty become a stumbling-block to them that are weak<sup>2</sup>:" and even in a case of comparative indifference he laid it down for his rule of conduct to abstain from that which might make "his brother to offend<sup>3</sup>." How much more should this be our rule of conduct in a case, not of indifference, but of religious obligation, even as it relates to ourselves alone! And how much more need have we in such a case to regard the Apostle's admonition, and beware, "lest when we sin so against the brethren, we sin against Christ!"

I have thus laid before you at some length my reasons for disapproving of the practice in question: I trust they will be thought sufficient. If it be observed that accidents will occasionally arise to prevent a punctual attendance at the hour of service; I answer that such accidents will be rare, where a person, knowing it to be his duty, resolves, and makes it his business withal, to be

<sup>1</sup> Dan. xii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 13

punctual. If the minister attends at the appointed hour, why cannot his congregation? If some of his congregation do, why cannot the rest? It is not however against occasional failures that the foregoing animadversions have been directed; but against a general indifference which is sometimes found to prevail about the time of coming to church; against an habitual and systematick custom of coming after the service is begun, and often when it is considerably advanced.

I have brought the question forward upon the strongest ground, that of its being a matter of religious obligation, affecting your duty to Almighty God, to your brethren, and to yourselves; if you accord with my reasoning, you will endeavour, I trust, with God's grace, to avoid, or, if necessary, to amend, what you cannot but condemn. You call yourselves Christians: as such it is your duty to glorify your Father which is in heaven, as by other works of piety, so by publickly uniting in his true and spiritual worship; to contribute to the edification of your brethren, as by other acts of charity, so also by exciting and encouraging them to the like practice of devotion; and to work out your own salvation in these, as in all other exercises, of a holy and religious life. You call yourselves Protestants; members of the reformed Church established by the good providence of God in this country: as such it is your duty, and be-

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lieve me, my brethren, I esteem it your highest privilege, to unite in that form of worship, which the Church hath provided for the regulation of the devotions of her members, purified from every corruption of human imagination, and modelled and constructed upon the principles of that holy Scripture, which containeth all things necessary to salvation. But, whatever you may call yourselves, be assured of this; that you are neither Christians to any profitable purpose, nor are you consistent Protestants and true members of our reformed Church, unless you conscientiously offer to God that reasonable service which your profession pledges you to perform.

To one particular in that service your thoughts have at this time been directed. The considerations, on which they have been fixed, are calculated, I trust, to preserve you, if you are already, or, if you are not now, to induce you to become in future, by God's blessing, early attendants on his publick worship. I think also, that the like considerations, if duly applied, will induce you to be regular, and constant, and attentive, and devout in your attendance: that is, they will cause you, not to come occasionally only to church, but habitually and systematically: not to be present at one only of the publick devotions of the Lord's day, but at both; at the evening as well as at the morning service: not to be present only in person,

but to take your part in the devotions of the congregation, to follow the minister with your minds and thoughts through those portions of the service, which are appropriated to him, and to repeat with your lips those portions which the Church allows and directs you to repeat: lastly, not to join in the service with your lips only, but with your hearts; not to worship God with your bodies only but with your souls, as becomes the worshippers of that Spiritual Being, who requires those who worship Him to "worship him in spirit and in truth." All these effects, my brethren, may reasonably be expected to result from a due regard to such considerations as have been this day laid before you. I pray God that they may so. And with that prayer I leave the subject to your meditations; trusting that, if seriously and humbly pursued, it will by God's grace excite in your minds sentiments and desires correspondent to those, which the royal psalmist expressed in the text, and which ought to actuate the practice of every sincere Christian: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even panteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

Almighty and everlasting God, who art always more ready to hear than we to pray, and art wont to give more than either we desire or deserve; pour

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down upon us the abundance of thy mercy ; for-giving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask, but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord. Amen<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Collect for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

## DISCOURSE XVIII.

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### THE CHURCH'S PRACTICE OF PSALMODY, ITS ORIGIN, AND RULES FOR IT.

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COL. iii. 16.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom ; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

IT is a well known fact, that the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians was written at the same place, and about the same time, with that to the Ephesians : circumstances which account for a remarkable resemblance between the two in respect both of sentiment and of expression. Of this resemblance we have a striking example in the passage just recited to you from the Epistle to the Colossians, and in another which occurs in the fifth chapter of that to the Ephesians. This coincidence is natural in two compositions, addressed under the circumstances mentioned, to different

persons by the same individual : at the same time there is a natural variation in the two passages, as might be expected where the writer is to be regarded, not as making a transcript of the passage from one Epistle into the other, but as expressing the dictates of his own mind, forming themselves into different modes of expression. Thus to the Colossians he says, " Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom ; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Whilst to the Ephesians his language is, " Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit ; speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." The precept, you see, in each is directed to the same end, namely, the practice of one particular mode of worshipping God ; but in the former case it is especially founded on the "indwelling of the word of Christ," or the doctrine of the Gospel, "in all wisdom," within his faithful followers ; in the other, on the heathen enormities, from which they were delivered by Christ's Spirit ; the connexion between the different members of the latter passage appearing to be this : that whereas the heathens, in their Bacchanalian and other licentious feasts, sang songs in honour of their imaginary deities, songs, suited to those sen-

sual excesses which their false religion allowed them to indulge in. In opposition to such immoral indulgences, and such intemperate and impure songs, the Apostle exhorts the Ephesian converts to cultivate the gifts and graces of God's Holy Spirit, and in pursuance thereof to sing among themselves "psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs :" meaning probably in this, as in the other passage, by "psalms," the psalms of David, and the other Hebrew prophets, which are contained in the Old Testament ; by "hymns," other effusions of praise and thanksgiving, such as those of the Blessed Virgin, of Zacharias, and of Simeon, recorded in the Gospel ; and by "spiritual songs," all other similar compositions upon spiritual subjects, composed by the aid of the Holy Spirit : thus "singing, and making melody in their hearts," or "singing with grace in their hearts to the Lord." With these particular variations the general sentiment of the Apostle is in each case the same, recommending to the different Churches of Ephesus and Colosse the practice of this method of Divine worship. In proceeding with the subject I would crave your attention to some remarks, first, on the use of Psalmody as a department of the Church's publick devotions, and then on the proper manner of performing it.

### I. Singing is a natural mode of expressing joy

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in general, and especially religious exultation and joy. Accordingly in all periods, and in all nations of the world, it has been employed as a mode of grateful and festive adoration: and perhaps no people can be mentioned, as recorded in the annals of ancient history, or brought more recently to our notice by the discoveries of modern travellers and voyagers, in whatever degree of barbarity and simplicity, or of civilization and refinement, with whom singing has not constituted a part of the worship which they have addressed to the objects of their adoration.

As this mode of worship appears to be founded in the provisions of the God of nature, in those inclinations and faculties which He has bestowed upon his rational creatures; so is it agreeable to the several revelations which He has made of his will to men. Even before the delivery of the law to the people of Israel, a memorable example of this mode of religious thanksgiving is transmitted to us, as having been uttered by the chosen people on occasion of their marvellous release from their Egyptian bondage, and on the destruction of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea. This magnificent song, which occupies the greatest part of the fifteenth chapter of Exodus, is the most ancient of all poems now extant, at least of those, the age of which has been ascertained: showing at the same time the early connexion which subsisted between

religion, poetry, and musick ; and exhibiting an example of that species of poetical composition which the Hebrews cultivated more than all other sorts, and in which they particularly excelled ; namely, the rendering of publick thanks in songs of triumph to God for the prosperity which He vouchsafed them.

Under the law this practice appears from the Old Testament to have been commonly observed by the Jews as part of their religious worship, if not distinctly by Divine appointment, at least with the Divine approbation. Regulations and provisions for the solemn performance of this service were made by David, the royal Prophet<sup>1</sup> : and the Book of Psalms, composed as it was by him, and by other holy men, speaking under the influence of God's Holy Spirit, consists entirely of religious songs, which were recited in succeeding times by the Jews in their temple, as they still are in their synagogues. Praises and thanksgivings to the Lord by singing attended the dedication of the first temple, as we read in the Chronicles<sup>2</sup> ; and the dedication of the second, as we are informed by Ezra<sup>3</sup>. And the Prophet Amos, together with burnt offerings, and meat offerings, combines “the noise of their songs, and the melody of their

<sup>1</sup> 1 Chron. xxiii. 5. xxv. 1.      <sup>2</sup> 2 Chron. vii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ezra vi. 16.

viols<sup>1</sup>,” as parts of the service of the Jewish solemn assemblies. Whilst the Book of Psalms, as it contains compositions fit for the celebration of the Divine perfections by singing, so does it contain directions to “the saints and servants of the Lord, to sing unto him and give thanks for a remembrance of his holiness<sup>2</sup>;” to “sing unto the honour of his name, and make his praise glorious<sup>3</sup>;” to “sing praises unto God while we have our being<sup>4</sup>;” to “sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints<sup>5</sup>:” conformable to which was the conduct of our blessed Lord, who joined in singing psalms or hymns of praise with his Apostles.

As this mode of worshipping God prevailed under the law, so it was God's will that it should be observed under the Gospel likewise: for the prophet Isaiah, announcing the exultation and thanksgiving which should ensue upon the manifestation of Christ and the evangelical covenant, foretells that men “should lift up their voice and sing for the majesty of the Lord;” and by an expression, which brings the subject home immediately to our own business and bosoms, he declares, that they should “glorify the Lord God of Israel in the isles of the sea<sup>6</sup>. ”

<sup>1</sup> Amos v. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xxx. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. lxiv. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. civ. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Pa. cxlix. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Is. xxiv. 14, 15.

Accordingly the Apostle St. Paul, not only himself with Silas, under affliction and in prison, "sang praises unto God<sup>1</sup>," but made it a part of his instruction to Christians, that they should exercise themselves in similar acts of religious worship: directing the Ephesians, as we have seen, to "speak to themselves," or to one another, that is, to encourage one another, either by uniting in singing at the same time, or by singing in alternate portions, "psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in their heart to the Lord;" and the Colossians, to "teach and admonish one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts to the Lord." And another Apostle, St. James, prescribes in his general epistle, "Is any among you merry?" or in a joyful frame of mind on account of blessings received, for the words "mirth" and "merry" comprehended formerly the most solemn and sacred kinds of gladness, "Let him sing psalms."<sup>2</sup>

In pursuance of these rules, the primitive Christians appear to have made singing a constant part of their religious worship. It is a remarkable fact, that a heathen writer, Pliny, at an early period after the first promulgation of Christianity, describes the Christians by their characteristick of

<sup>\*</sup> Acts xvi. 25.

<sup>2</sup> James v. 13.

meeting together on a stated day, and singing hymns to Christ as God. This particular in their worship is transmitted to us likewise by the writers of the Church, and in the remains of ancient liturgies; the psalms, the doxology or hymn of glory, and the Hallelujah, being among the most ordinary forms, in which they expressed their joy and thankfulness, and magnified the God of their salvation.

In this department of religious worship, the whole congregation in the early ages of the Gospel were privileged to unite. In process of time, however, singers by profession, who had been appointed, prudently at first, to lead and direct the assembly, by degrees usurped the whole performance. But at the Reformation the people were restored to their spiritual privilege, in this as in many other particulars: the singing of psalms was permitted in connexion with the prescribed Common Prayers of the Church: and a metrical Version of the Psalms, commonly called by us "the Old Version," was "set forth and allowed to be sung in all churches of all the people together." Similar permission and allowance was afterwards given for the New Version. And thus, under the sanction and regulation of lawful authority, psalmody again became a part of the general service of the congregation.

The practice of singing, thus introduced and

perpetuated among the parts of Divine worship, still continues to hold its place among our religious services. In observing the practice we act agreeably to the precepts of Apostles, and to the example of the general Church of God on earth: if we need a further argument to inforce it, we may refer to the example of the Church of God in heaven: for there, that two or three examples may be cited out of many, as Isaiah records his vision, "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: . . . . And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory<sup>1</sup>:" or, as St. John describes the like scene, "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come<sup>2</sup>;" and, again, "They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God; and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy<sup>3</sup>."

II. We have thus seen the sanction which psalmody, or the celebration of God's praise in

<sup>1</sup> Isa. vi. 1, 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. iv. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. xv. 3.

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sacred songs, derives from holy Scripture as a part of religious worship. I would now proceed to bring under your consideration some remarks on the proper mode of performing it.

1. First, then, it is a service, in which as all the members of a congregation have the privilege, so also it behoves them all, to bear a part, both in heart and in voice, with one mind and one mouth: at least in heart and mind, but in voice also and with their mouths, so far as they have ability. This is agreeable to the Apostle's injunction, "speaking to yourselves," or to one another; "teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with grace in your hearts to the Lord:" expressions these, which indicate a general co-operation in the assembly, whether by way of united or of alternate recitation; the latter, namely, that of alternate recitation, being the manner in which the prose version of the psalms and hymns is "said or sung," that is, is read or chanted in our churches, by alternation between the minister and the people in common parochial congregations, or between the two sides of the choir successively in our cathedral and collegiate churches; the former, or the mode of united recitation, being that in which the metrical versions of the psalms are sung by our congregations in general, more especially in our parish churches.

And as this mutual co-operation is conformable to the Apostolical rule, so is it agreeable to innumerable Scriptural examples, and consistent with all reason and propriety; for what can be more fitting and reasonable, than that the song of praise and thankfulness for blessings, of which all participate, should be uttered unanimously and synchronously by all? How becoming, and at the same time how noble and impressive, was that union of heart and voice in the first psalm of religious thanksgiving upon record, when Moses and the children of Israel sang this song unto the Lord, “I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea;” and Miriam, the prophetess, with all the women of Israel, “answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea<sup>1</sup>. ” Thus in after times, in conjunction with “the house of Aaron and the house of Levi,” or the ministers in particular of the Jewish church, “the house of Israel” at large, and all “they that feared the Lord,” or the members of the Church in general, were called upon to “praise the Lord<sup>2</sup>. ” Thus at the dedication of Solomon’s temple, “all the children of Israel bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xv. 1. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. cxxxv. 19, 20, 21.

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good, for his mercy endureth for ever<sup>1</sup>." Thus, in the early Christian Church, the Apostles and their disciples united in adoring and praising God : for "they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that therein is<sup>2</sup>;" thence proceeding with a thankful acknowledgment of his wisdom and overruling goodness, as set forth by the mouth of his servant David in the second Psalm. And thus St. John records the harmonious celebration of God's praises by the blessed in heaven, "And I heard a voice from heaven as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps. And they sang as it were a new song before the throne<sup>3</sup>." And again, "I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands ; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. vii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Acts iv. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. xiv. 2, 3.

glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever<sup>1</sup>."

True, we may well despair of witnessing in our assemblies upon earth any such harmonious thanksgiving as this. Much perhaps there will always be of real imperfection in our congregations: much more which a refined and censorious judgment may criticise and condemn. But the religious heart will nevertheless perceive much also in the united voices of a large Christian congregation, to approve and to enjoy. There is something of simple dignity, of magnificence, of unearthly solemnity and sublimity, in the sound of many voices, rude though they may be, and little improved and softened by artificial harmony, when, as the Scripture expresses it, they "shout unto God with the voice of triumph<sup>2</sup>," and "make a joyful noise to the rock of their salvation<sup>3</sup>."

How different from such sounds as these is the effort of a solitary voice, which, having in vain invited the assembled people to unite in singing to the praise and glory of God, is constrained to set forth that praise and glory, as best it may, by a feeble and inefficient strain, the representative of the voices of a large, perhaps, but listless and silent congregation! How different is such an effort from

<sup>1</sup> Rev. v. 11, 12, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xlvi. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm xcvi. 1.

the intentions of the Church, who, near the beginning of her daily services, has provided, and would fain put into the mouths of her ministers and people such petitions, promises, and mutual encouragements as these, "O Lord, open thou our lips: And our mouths shall shew forth thy praise?" "Praise ye the Lord: The Lord's name be praised." "O come let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation: let us come before his presence with thanksgiving; and shew ourselves glad in him with psalms."

What can be the cause, my brethren, why we should so generally refuse to exercise so great a privilege as this? Why, when such are the intentions of the Church, and such the instructions of holy Scripture, and such the example of the saints of God, we should so generally refuse to "speak to one another, and to admonish one another," in celebrating the praises of the Lord our God? Are we ashamed to lift up our voices in worship of our Maker, and in "telling of his glory, his praise, and his wondrous works?" Are we too thoughtless, or too capricious, or too indolent, to lift them up? Yet, surely, He gives us encouragement enough to confess Him before men, when He assures us, that "those who honour him he will honour." Do we disdain to exercise our faculties upon such a theme? Yet what theme can be equally worthy of our celebration, as the perfections of our God

and Saviour; what equally worthy to employ the faculties which He has given us, and to cause us to exclaim with the holy Psalmist, "Awake up, my glory; awake, lute and harp: I will magnify thee, O Lord, among the people." Are our tongues too polished, are our ears too delicate, is our sense of musical sounds too curious and refined, to permit us to take part with the simpler melodies of the Church, with the more humble tones of our less favoured brethren? And is this the gratitude which we cherish to the Giver of all good, for the talents with which He has endowed us, and the qualities which He has enabled us to acquire beyond others, that we, for such a cause, hold ourselves exempt from uniting with them in celebration of the Great God and Father of all?

But, perhaps, we are unable to join the congregation in the Psalms: I mean, of course, the singing Psalms; for, as to the reading of the prose version of the Psalms, that reason can obviously apply only to the most uneducated and unlettered members of a congregation; and with respect to all others, as they have ability, so is it incumbent on them to join. But, as to the singing Psalms, inability to join may no doubt be pleaded in a greater or less degree by several members of a congregation. With respect to them the excuse for not joining is unanswerable: rather it would be improper for them to attempt to join, lest they

should disturb the devout feelings of their brethren; and give rise perhaps to others of a different kind. Yet even persons, such as these, who cannot join their brethren in voice, may join them nevertheless in heart and mind: they may do, what it is the bounden duty of all and each to do, they may abstain from every symptom of irreverence and indifference to the work of praise which employs the assembly: they may abstain from all improper gestures: they may keep themselves silent from all idle and frivolous, if they must from incompetency be silent from all good words: they may be attentive, and celebrate God's glory with their understanding, if not with their lips: they may be devout and fervent in spirit: and thus, as the Apostle beautifully says, they may "sing and make melody in their hearts unto the Lord."

2. There is another particular, whereby persons such as these, no less than others, may testify a becoming sense of this part of religious worship, by doing that which every considerate and pious person will probably concur in thinking that all are required and ought to do, however numerous be those in most of our congregations, who permit themselves to act at variance with the principles of the Church, founded as those principles are on the reason of the thing, and on the representations of Holy Scripture. I allude to the posture fit for those who are engaged in the celebration of God's

praise and glory. The Church, as you are aware, directs her congregations to be "all standing up," during the saying or the singing of the prose version of the Psalms in the usual course of the Morning and Evening Prayer. And by the same direction she must be understood to require, that "all" be "standing up" likewise during the singing of the metrical Psalms: for no imaginable reason can be assigned for the one which is not equally conclusive for the other. And yet many are the persons in our different congregations, for I make the remark with no special reference, and your observation, my brethren, will doubtless correspond with mine in bearing witness to the truth of the general remark, that in our different congregations are many persons, who are attentive to the direction of the Church during the reading of the Psalms, but are altogether neglectful of it during the singing.

But come now, my brethren, and let us reason together a little upon this matter. Is not the singing of Psalms an act of Divine worship? Should not all acts of Divine worship be performed with outward demonstrations of reverence? Nay, do not such outward demonstrations enter into the very notion of Divine worship, according to the proper purport of the original phrases, by which "worship" is signified both in the Old and New Testaments, and which literally

denote the outward demonstrations themselves? Is the posture of *sitting* such a demonstration? Again: are not many of the Psalms addressed altogether, and are not many others addressed in part, immediately to God Himself? Is the posture of *sitting* that wherein it would be thought respectful to present a formal address to a superior? Is it that, which we should choose for an address to an earthly sovereign? Is it that which we ought to choose for an address to the Sovereign of heaven, high and mighty, the King of kings, and Lord of lords? Again: Is not the singing of Psalms an exercise professedly undertaken to the praise and glory of God? Does the posture of *sitting* bespeak a becoming sense of the nature of the service? If it does, why do those, who sit during the previous Psalm, rise at the doxology, or hymn of glory? and what reason can be given by them for rising at the doxology, which should not likewise influence them to rise and stand at the previous Psalm, sung, as the whole is, to God's praise and glory? Again, what doth the Scripture say for the assistance of our judgment on this question? Doth it give any sanction to the posture of sitting, as fit for the celebration of God's praises? Doth it not rather discountenance that posture generally, and prescribe such as may be more suitable to the idea of religious adoration; as when in the Revelation, on "the giving of

glory, and honour, and thanks<sup>1</sup> to God, it describes the elders, who were previously sitting round about the throne, as “falling down before him that sat on the throne, and worshipping him that liveth for ever and ever, and casting their crowns before the throne<sup>2</sup>?”. Specially doth it not teach us, with respect to the posture particularly appointed by the Church, that, in the service of the temple, not only were the “Levites” to “stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord; and likewise at even<sup>3</sup>;” but that “when they waited with instruments of musick to praise the Lord, all Israel stood<sup>4</sup>,” and that they said to the people, “Stand up, and bless the Lord your God<sup>5</sup>?” And doth it not set before us the like example in the conduct of the heavenly host, by teaching in a vision of St. John in the Revelation, that “a great multitude, whom no man could number, stood before the throne, and cried with a loud voice, Salvation to our God<sup>6</sup>;” and in another, that “they, who had gotten the victory over the beast, stood and sang the song of Moses and of the Lamb<sup>7</sup>? Again, doth not the history of the Church inform us, that upon such examples as these was founded the practice of the primitive Church of Christ; and that such parts of the pub-

<sup>1</sup> Rev. iv. 10.    <sup>2</sup> 1 Chron. xxiii. 30.    <sup>3</sup> 2 Chron. vii. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Neh. ix. 5.    <sup>5</sup> Rev. vii. 9.    <sup>6</sup> Rev. xv. 2, 3.

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lick service, as were not celebrated in the posture of kneeling, were celebrated in that of standing, this being accounted another form of the reverential worship of Almighty God, especially in the acts of praise and thanksgiving? Again, is not psalmody a service, for the most part, of joyful thanksgiving and praise? And does not the erection of the body fitly express the lifting up of the heart in joy, and require us all to be active partakers in it? And is not therefore that posture more becoming which bespeaks an active worshipper, rather than one which indicates indolence, perhaps inattention, or at the best is more suitable to an observer only and a listener, than to an active participator in the service? Again, is it not more conducive to that "order and decency<sup>1</sup>," with which, according to the Apostle's precept, all things should be done in religious assemblies; and is it not more conducive to that "edification<sup>2</sup>," which should be the object, as the Apostle also teaches us, of all such assemblies; that an uniformity of practice, as well as an agreement in sentiments, should prevail in a Christian congregation? and is not that practice to be deemed more eligible for all, in behalf of which much may be said to recommend it, rather than one for which no reasonable argument can be adduced? Lastly,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

if this were a question of mere indifference, resting upon no positive ground of reason or of Scripture, still is it not true, as stated in our thirty-fourth Article of religion, that “every national Church hath authority to ordain ceremonies or rites, so that all things be done to edifying?” Hath not our national Church ordained, that “all” her people shall be “standing up” during the saying or singing of the Psalms? And is it not incumbent upon all readily and cheerfully to comply? Some persons indeed there may be, who are inattentive to the ordinances of the Church, nor less to the arguments of reason, and the lessons to be derived from scriptural examples of the Saints of God; and who may think lightly of all outward forms in the performance of divine worship. Such however cannot be supposed to be the case with you, my brethren, professed members as you are of our most scriptural Church. If, therefore, with any of you a less commendable practice than that which has been urged upon your observance should be found to prevail, together with the belief that such a practice has been the result of inconsideration, I cherish the hope that a due regard to the arguments which have been now submitted to your thoughts, will, by the blessing of God, conduce to its correction; and that you will be thus brought by the Divine grace to a better mind, and to a more praiseworthy, a more devout, and a more edifying practice.

3. For after all, let it ever be borne in mind, that the “singing of psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs,” by no means comes up to a compliance with the Apostolical injunction, and by no means fills properly its part as a department of religious worship, unless it be accompanied with corresponding sentiments; unless, in the Apostle’s language, we “sing and make melody with grace in our hearts unto the Lord.” It is not by our outward gestures, however fit and requisite they may be as indications of devotion, nor is it by the service of the lips alone, however indispensable such service may be accounted as the publick expression of our feelings, that this department of religion has its perfect work. And far indeed ought we to be from resting satisfied with the mere sensible gratification of pleasing an itching ear, of exercising a tuneful voice, or of exhibiting musical knowledge and skill. The praise and glory of God is the object which we should have in view, and which our singing should be directed to promote; so that by this, as by all our other religious exercises, we may cultivate, and cherish, and strengthen in our hearts and souls a lively sense of the Divine perfections; and thus grow in holiness ourselves; and let our light shine before men in the celebration of God’s praises, that they also may see our good works, and hear our halle-

lujahs, and join with us in glorifying our Father which is in heaven.

Upon the whole, and in conclusion, my brethren, let me exhort you, as servants of God and members of a scriptural and reformed Church, not to be negligent of this which is at once your Christian liberty, and your Christian obligation ; but to bear your parts in this religious exercise, reverentially, vocally, heartily ; with reverential deportment of the body ; with voices attuned, as best as they may be, to the celebration of God's praise and glory ; and with hearts inwardly corresponding to the sentiments which your voices utter. "O praise the Lord, for it is a good thing to sing praises unto our God : yea, a joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful <sup>1</sup>." "O go your way into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise ; be thankful unto him, and speak good of his name <sup>2</sup>." "O praise the Lord ; laud ye the name of the Lord, praise it, O ye servants of the Lord ; ye that stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God <sup>3</sup>." "Rejoice in his holy name : let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord <sup>4</sup>." "Praise the Lord, O my soul ; and all that is within me praise his holy

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxlvii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. c. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. cxxxv. 1, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. cv. 3.

name<sup>1</sup>." So may we each of us discharge his or her particular office in this part of Divine worship; and encourage and assist our brethren in discharging theirs; and contribute to fulfil the intentions, and add solemnity to the services, of the Church; and "give the Lord the honour due unto his name, and worship the Lord with holy worship." So may the celebration of God's glory conduce to the raising of our minds and souls above the things of this world; and elevate us more and more to the contemplation of high and heavenly things; and improve us in the knowledge and love of Him whose praise we celebrate. So may it render us more meet to partake the inheritance, and to join the assembly, of the saints in light; and to lift up our voices together with them in that blissful state, of which the praises of God compose one of the most appropriate occupations and the most delightful enjoyments: where no irreverence, real or apparent, diminishes the beauty of holiness in God's worship; where no voice is silent amid the general harmony: but the angels and the redeemed of God stand round about or fall down before the throne, saying, Amen, Allelujah: and to "the voice which cometh out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him both small and great," is heard in answer

<sup>1</sup> Ps. ciii. 1.

"as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Allelujah ; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honour to him<sup>1</sup>!"

Now unto that Lord God Omnipotent, the Holy, Holy, Holy, Three Persons in the unity of one undivided Godhead, be blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, henceforth and for ever. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xix. 5, 6, 7.

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NOTE.—The Author cannot be satisfied to take leave of the subject of the foregoing Discourse, without earnestly lamenting an irregularity which has been lately growing up in our parochial singing. Between two and three years ago he attempted to draw attention to this irregularity by a short pamphlet, entitled, "Thoughts on the Singing of unauthorised Hymns in the Church, respectfully submitted to the consideration of the Archbishops and Bishops of the United Church, by one of their brethren :" the drift of the pamphlet being to specify sundry evils inherent in the practice, and to recommend that the subject should be duly considered by the Governors of the Church, and that what was judged right to be done should be placed on the footing of proper authority, so as to be agreeable to her laws, consistent with her principle of a regulated uniformity in Divine worship, and calculated to satisfy the reasonable and conscientious scruples of her ministers and members in general. The Author is well aware, that

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his individual influence is of little moment. But the subject itself appears to him one of very great importance: and charged as he is with a certain office and responsibility, he holds it his duty to take every proper opportunity of soliciting consideration, and, if possible, a remedy for an irregularity, which gives occasion for calling in question the character of the Church and her discipline, the vigilance and the faithful diligence of her rulers in correcting error, and the fidelity of her parochial clergy in their ministrations; which affects the decency, the order, and the integrity of her worship; endangers the purity of her faith; causes disagreements and differences among her ministers; and checks the edification, throws a stumbling-block in the way of the devotion, and tends to weaken the attachment, of many of the most sober-minded of her people.

But for the evils of this irregularity the Author requests the reader's attention to the above-named pamphlet: and for the insufficiency of the reasons, sometimes pleaded in defence of it, he would refer to the Christian Remembrancer, for February and March, 1838.

## DISCOURSE XIX.

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### THE CHURCH'S COMMINATION, A PIOUS AND CHARITABLE SERVICE.

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JAMES v. 19, 20.

Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him ; Let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

OF all the virtues, which give grace and dignity to the Christian character, there is no one more essentially incorporated with our holy religion, or more excellent and valuable in itself, than that of which St. Paul has given us a most beautiful description in the thirteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians. I need hardly mention that the description to which I allude is that of charity, as characterized by its peculiar qualities. It is remarkable that the Apostle in this description does not insist upon the outward acts produced by this heavenly principle, but rather

sets forth the principle itself in its operation upon the heart ; giving us to understand that it is the inward disposition, which constitutes the value of our conduct ; and taking it for granted that, where such a disposition exists, the fruits of a benevolent conduct will naturally follow. Thus, if the heart “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth,” it will of course be desirous of contributing to the promotion of the one, and the diminution of the other : and so with respect to the other qualities, which St. Paul ascribes to this divine principle.

One of the most characteristick outward acts, which accordingly proceed from Christian charity, is that which is specified by another Apostle ; namely, St. James in my text : the act, that is to say, of converting a sinner from the error of his way, and leading him to true repentance. The two Apostles are in fact recommending the same principle : the former expressly specifying the inward disposition, the latter the outward conduct, that are produced by it. Charity, saith St. Paul, “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” “Brethren,” saith St. James, “if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him ; Let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins :” which last may be noticed as the same effect that a

third Apostle, St. Peter, ascribes to the same principle, where he says, “Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.” Upon which phrase of “hiding or covering a multitude of sins,” we may observe in passing, that it may be understood, either with reference to the converted sinner, whose sins, however numerous, shall be forgiven on his being thus led to repentance; or rather perhaps, according to the interpretation of the most judicious divines, with reference to the charitable person, by whom the sinner shall have been converted; and who shall thereby not only be the happy instrument of saving the sinner’s soul from death, but shall be himself also better qualified, by this testimony of true Christian charity, for the mercy of God, through the merits and intercession of Christ Jesus our Lord.

In conformity with these remarks, suggested by a comparison of the several passages that have been noticed, we perceive that it is the property of this excellent grace of Christian charity, to operate not upon the heart only, but upon the conduct: we perceive also, that “the conversion of a sinner” to a due sense of his sin, in order to his reformation, is a characteristick act of such charity: lastly, we perceive the great value annexed to this act of charity; inasmuch as it both “saves the soul” of him who is the object of it, and pro-

bably acquires favour for him who exercises it in the sight of Almighty God. I would beg you to retain these reflexions in your memories: and I trust you will readily discern the application of them, as I proceed in the discussion of the subject, to which I have judged them a convenient introduction, and to which I now propose to direct your attention.

If there be any quality, by which our national Church is distinguished in her services, it is her true Christian charity; testified, as by other unequivocal marks, so likewise by the anxiety where-with she endeavours to convince of their sin and danger those persons who have “erred from the truth;” to “convert them from the error of their way;” and thereby to “save their souls from death.” And if there be any particular part of her services, in which this Christian charity is most signally manifested, it is that most solemn, impressive, and affecting office, which, under the title of “A Commination, or denouncing of God’s anger and judgements against sinners, with certain prayers,” she hath appointed “to be used on the first day of Lent.” But by the most strange per-version of her purpose, and misrepresentation of her character, founded on palpable ignorance and inattention, in some cases on prejudice and ill-will towards her, she is on that very account accused

of I know not what of impiety and uncharitableness; as if she thereby taught her members to call down curses upon themselves or their neighbours, and so to be guilty of an extreme degree of wickedness and folly.

Now, as it is much to be desired, that all those, who join in the services of the Church, should be convinced of the propriety of her several provisions for publick worship; I am willing to avail myself of this opportunity of endeavouring to remove any misapprehension, which may possibly have been instilled into any of your minds; and to set this particular service before you in the colours which properly belong to it. And that, not merely from a general wish that the institutions of the Church may stand clear of all objection in your estimation; but as the service in question will form part of your devotions on the first day of that penitential season, the periodical return of which is now nearly approaching, I think this a convenient time for explaining and elucidating it, that those who attend the service on that day may be prepared to join in it without scruple or doubtfulness, with a clear understanding of its purpose, and a rational conviction of its propriety. I shall therefore employ this occasion in enlarging upon the intent of the Church in the "Commination," and upon the course pursued by her for the accomplishment of that intent: and the result I am per-

suaded will be a conviction in the mind of every reasonable hearer, that her provisions in this behalf, so far from being, as is improperly supposed, open to any sound, nay, to any specious objection, are in fact fully conformable to the dictates of that Christian charity, which “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;” and which never displays its excellence to more advantage, than in endeavouring to “convert the sinner from the error of his way,” and to “save his soul from death.”

I. On turning to the office in your Common Prayer Books, where it stands the last of the occasional services, and immediately before the Psalms, you will find, that it commences with referring to “a godly discipline,” which existed “in the primitive Church, that at the beginning of Lent such persons as stood convicted of notorious sin were put to open penance, and punished in this world, that their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord; and that others, admonished by their example, might be the more afraid to offend.” We should be diverted too much from our proposed object, if we were to dilate on the primitive discipline here alluded to; on the good consequences, which it was calculated to produce; on the manner, in which it degenerated from its original purpose in consequence of the corruptions of

the Romish Church ; and on the causes, which obstructed the revival of it at the Reformation, although, as our Reformers go on to say, its restoration was “much to be wished.” Suffice it to remark, that our reformed Church of England, finding the impracticability of doing all the good she desired, was solicitous of doing all that she could. She instituted therefore the office, of which we are now speaking : and of which it will be most satisfactory, to suffer her to give her own account in her own language.

She proceeds then to say : “ Instead whereof,” namely, of the primitive discipline before mentioned, “ until the said discipline may be restored again, which is much to be wished, it is thought good, that at this time, in the presence of you all, should be read the general sentences of God’s cursing against impenitent sinners, gathered out of the seven and twentieth chapter of Deuteronomy, and other places of Scripture ; and that ye should answer to every sentence *Amen* : to the intent, that, being admonished of the great indignation of God against sinners, ye may the rather be moved to earnest and true repentance ; and may walk more warily in these dangerous days ; fleeing from such vices, for which ye affirm with your own mouths the curse of God to be due.” We have here then a statement of the Church’s motive in providing this office, together with a

summary of the office itself. Upon each of these a few remarks shall be offered.

II. Now, in the first place, with respect to the intent and motives of the Church, nothing, I am sure, can be more perfectly unexceptionable, nothing more consistent with the soundest reason, nothing more agreeable to the spirit of the tenderest affection, and the most pure piety. For what is her intent? It is, as you have just heard, that all her members, "being admonished of the great indignation of God against sinners, may the rather be moved to earnest and true repentance; and may walk more warily in these dangerous days; fleeing from such vices, for which they affirm with their own mouths the curse of God to be due." In other words, I will not say in plainer, for plainer cannot be devised, but in other words it is, that, knowing and acknowledging the terror of the Lord, denounced by God Himself against impenitent sinners, they may be persuaded truly to repent of, and effectually to forsake, their former sins; to watch over their conduct with that caution, which becomes creatures, encompassed with such infirmities as are incident to human nature, and liable to still further corruption from the evil influence of those with whom they communicate; and so to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this.

present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." I am sure I need not insist more at large upon the *intent* of the Church, as thus distinctly and unambiguously avowed by her. I am sure I need not say more to satisfy you, how entirely her intent is conceived in the spirit of that heavenly principle, which St. Paul describes as " rejoicing not in iniquity, but rejoicing in the truth ;" and which St. James represents by one of its most appropriate actions, as engaged in " converting the sinner from the error of his way," and in " saving his soul from death."

III. But if the Church is thus unexceptionable, thus praiseworthy, as far as relates to her intent, is she equally intitled to commendation, is she equally free from all just occasion of blame, as to the *manner* in which she carries her intent into execution ? To satisfy ourselves upon this question, we will examine her manner : we will look accordingly to the other division, on which it was proposed to remark, namely, the contents of the service before us : we will see what provision she there makes for effecting the repentance and salvation of her people : and her words, I doubt not, will prove, on examination, to be like the words of the Lord, whose minister she is ; " pure words, even as the silver which from the earth is tried,

and purified seven times in the fire<sup>1</sup>." The provision is, that, "at the time" appointed, "in the presence of all" the congregation then assembled, "should be read the general sentences of God's cursing against impenitent sinners, gathered out of the seven and twentieth chapter of Deuteronomy, and other places of Scripture: and that the congregation should answer to every sentence *Amen.*" Our best mode of proceeding now will be, to consider this provision in two points of view: namely, first as to the *origin* and *fitness* of the provision itself; secondly, as to the *form of words*, in which the minister is directed to perform his part of the solemnity, and to the answer which is required of the people.

IV. As to the *origin* of the solemnity here appointed by the Church, they who have allowed themselves in the practice of deriding or condemning this service, of censuring it as foolish or wicked, impious or uncharitable, may possibly be surprised to learn, that it is a solemnity of Divine original. By command of the Lord God of Israel, it was enjoined by Moses upon that people, as you will find in the eleventh and twenty-seventh chapters of Deuteronomy, the latter of which is specified by the Church in the preface already cited: in

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xii. 7.

obedience to the Divine authority, that instituted the rite, it was religiously observed by Joshua, as recorded in the eighth chapter of the book that bears his name; and was so transmitted to succeeding generations of the Jewish nation, as we are informed by their historian Josephus. Surely a solemnity, which had such an origin, ought not, when the least is said, to be lightly and rashly called in question, much less to be hastily and inconsiderately condemned.

V. But it may be said perhaps, that this was a ceremonial institution, and therefore ought not to be observed by Christians. This, however, is not a correct statement of the case. It is true, indeed, that the separation of the twelve tribes of Israel into two divisions, and the arrangement of them, one half on Mount Gerizim and the other on Mount Ebal, together with some other circumstances in the Jewish manner of performing the solemnity, were purely ceremonial. But it is no less true, that the main *end* of the solemnity, and the *purpose* for which it was prescribed, are of a moral nature; tending to the honour of God's laws, and the promotion of real holiness. For what, let me ask, is the solemnity? It is a declaration of the laws of God against impenitent sinners, and of the sentences which He has Himself denounced against them; accompanied with a

profession of belief, that his laws are righteous, and the sentences by which they are sanctioned equitable and just. Of such a declaration and profession the tendency can be no other, than to set forth the glory of God by magnifying his essential attributes, and to set forward the conversion and salvation of all men, by impressing them with the proper character and the terrible effects of sin. The solemnity, therefore, is in itself truly moral: and is, therefore, perfectly fit for the Gospel times, and as suitable to the devotions of the Christian as it was to those of the Jewish Church. And, although, blessed be God! it is true, as the Apostle says, that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us<sup>1</sup>," yet it is true only with respect to those who sincerely and effectually repent. Upon those who continue in unrepented sin the curse still remains in force: from those, who have repented and brought forth fruits meet for repentance, it is removed for the sake of their Redeemer. It is fit, therefore, that all, whether penitent or impenitent, should avow their belief in the truth and equity of these curses: the penitent, as an acknowledgment of the punishment, which his sins in their own nature deserve; as an act of gratitude to the Lord, for whose merits they are pardoned; and withal

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iii. 13.

as a salutary admonition to him, that he again incur not the penalty, by becoming again the slave of sin: the impenitent, as a method of awaking him from his dangerous security, and bringing him to repentance and amendment before it be too late.

VI. I wish you to take notice, that I have spoken of this solemnity, as "a declaration of the laws of God against impenitent sinners, and of the sentences which he has denounced against them; and a profession of belief, that his laws are righteous, and the sentences by which they are sanctioned equitable and just." It is precisely what I have described it to be; and it is no more. It is not the expression of a wish or a prayer, that we or others may be cursed, as is sometimes ignorantly and wrongfully imagined: but it is a statement only of "the general sentences of God's cursing against impenitent sinners," on the part of the minister; and an affirmation, on the part of the people, that "the curse of God is due for those vices," against which God Himself hath in terms denounced it. This indeed appears with sufficient plainness from the introductory part of the office, to which our attention has been thus far confined. But perhaps it will appear still more plainly, if we look, as was next proposed, to the *form of words*, in which the minister and the people are re-

quired to perform their respective parts of the solemnity.

VII. The minister's words are these: "Cursed is the man, that maketh any carved or molten image, to worship it;" "Cursed is he that curseth his father or mother;" and so on to the last sentence, "Cursed are the unmerciful, fornicators, and adulterers, covetous persons, idolaters, slanderers, drunkards, and extortioners." You see, the language is not, "Cursed *be he*, or *be they*;" "Cursed *may he be*, or *may they be*;" but simply and indicatively, "Cursed *is he* or *are they*," by whom such and such sins are committed. The sentiment is, as clearly as language can make it, not an imprecation; not an evil wish or prayer against the guilty persons; but a bare *declaration*, that such persons are objects of God's avowed displeasure, and will suffer under the consequences of it, unless they repent.

VIII. This, then, is the minister's part in this solemn service. The part of the *people* is, that "to every sentence they answer and say, Amen." That is, they express their *assent* to the declaration of the minister; or affirm their *belief* that what the minister has declared is true.

Some persons, as hath been already intimated, suppose the word "Amen" in this place to signify

a wish or a prayer on the part of those who use it. Why? Most probably because it is the word which they are taught to use at the end of a prayer. And such is its meaning doubtless, when used in such a place. But it is equally beyond a doubt, that such is not its meaning in this place. The fact is, the word “Amen” originally and properly signifies no more than *verily* or *truly*: and it is a form of giving assent to the truth of that, to which it is added. If that, to which it is added, be a prayer, then it is a joining in the prayer; and it is as much as to say, *So be it*, or *So I pray* or *wish it may be*. If that, to which it is added, be a Creed or profession of belief, then it is an avowal of assent to the creed or profession; and it is as much as to say, *So it is*, or, *So I believe it to be*; All this I steadfastly believe. And thus in the case of any other declaration or affirmative proposition, such as we have already seen to be the character of these sentences, the “Amen” is a *declaration* or *affirmation*, precisely of the same nature and to the same effect as that to which it is annexed. Just as if the people were to declare in answer to the minister, *It is as you have said*. You pronounce that all they are accursed, who do “err and go astray from God’s commandments:” you pronounce only what God himself hath pronounced; and we cannot but believe and confess it to be true. Thus I trust you

perceive, that the “Amen” in this place is not, and cannot be, a wish or a prayer, that the curse may fall upon your heads or those of any other persons: but that it is indeed an affirmation with your own mouths, that the curse of God is due to the sins enumerated, as the Church most distinctly and expressly states to be its signification.

IX. It may possibly serve to set the matter before us in a still clearer light, and to remove any remnant of difficulty which may be lurking in your minds, if I confirm the foregoing observation concerning the proper meaning of the word “Amen,” by citing two or three examples, in which it is employed with a meaning evidently different from that of a wish or a prayer. It occurs with a different meaning very frequently in the Gospels, where the word, which we translate “verily,” is “Amen” in the original, and might stand so with perfect propriety in our version; so that, instead of “Verily, verily, I say unto you,” the passage would then run, “Amen, Amen, I say unto you.” After this manner the angels, and other heavenly beings in the Revelation, commence their song of thanksgiving with “Amen;” and our blessed Lord in the same book makes the following declaration concerning Himself, “I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore,

Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death?" where the word can evidently bear no other sense but that of a strong affirmation. Thus again, in further illustration, it may be remarked, that Jesus, who is the truth, is called "the Amen, the faithful and true witness;" and it is said, that "in him the promises of God are yea and Amen;" that is, most certain and most true.

These examples may suffice to shew that the word is frequently employed, agreeably to its proper and original signification, for the purpose of conveying a very different sentiment from that of a wish or prayer. When therefore the people in the time of Joshua, as they were commanded by the law of God delivered to them by Moses, answered and said Amen to the reading of these curses, the language of the history does not require us to suppose, that their answer was a prayer to the Almighty that He would inflict the denounced punishments upon sinners: but we are left at liberty to suppose, what consistently with reason we cannot do otherwise than suppose; namely, that by their answer they testified their belief, that God would make good his threatenings, and inflict upon sinners the punishments which He denounced. And accordingly, when we ourselves after this original example answer, and say Amen to the reading of the same curses, we do no more than set to our seal that God is

true, and his threatenings worthy to be feared, forasmuch as He hath proclaimed them. So that on the whole the word Amen here is no more than an avowal of our conviction, that “he whom God blesseth is blessed, and he whom God curseth is cursed<sup>1</sup>.”

X. The “Commination” then, in respect whether of the minister’s part or of the people’s, is a declaration of the wrath of God against all impenitent sinners, especially against those who are guilty of the sins here enumerated. And that they are of the most heinous and deadliest character, and that they are most plainly threatened with God’s wrath and damnation both in the Law, and in the Prophets, and in the Gospels, no one, who is at all acquainted with those holy books, can for a moment doubt. They are denounced indeed in sentences, taken expressly from the word of God. They are idolatry against God; disobedience and contempt of parents; injustice to neighbours; misleading of the ignorant and miserable; oppression of the helpless; assassination, or other deep but secret mischief; adultery; corrupt condemnation of the guiltless; relying upon and serving the creature more than the Creator; these from the Old Testament: to which

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xxii. 6.

are added from the New some sins, that the Gospel pronounces damnable, such as unmercifulness, fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, and spiritual idolatry, slander, drunkenness, and extortion. Surely they who are guilty of these sins are in a state of condemnation, whether the Church by her ministers declares it, and by her people confirms the declaration, or not. Her declaration of God's threatenings, and her profession of belief in the truth of them, is not, as we have already seen, intended to bring, nor in point of fact is it capable of bringing, any evil upon any one. It cannot inflict a curse upon the penitent; it cannot make the impenitent in any way more accursed than they were before. It is therefore altogether, and in every point of view, acquitted of the charge of uncharitableness.

But, on the other hand, it may with reason advance its claim to be regarded as a most kind and charitable provision. Though it cannot bring a curse upon the guilty, much less upon the innocent, yet by holding up the curse plainly before the eyes of both, it may impress them with a lively sense of the danger of sin. It may be a wholesome caution therefore to the innocent, to walk more warily in these dangerous days: to the guilty it may be an alarming admonition of what they will finally suffer, if they persevere in guilt; and so may persuade them by the terrors of the Lord to

flee from such vices, for which the curse of God is affirmed to be due. Thus, though it cannot bring a curse upon any one, there is no one to whom it may not eventually prove a blessing: and thus, considered in its proper light, not as an occasion or aggravation of sufferings, but as a compassionate prediction of them in order to their prevention, it resembles those "woes" which our blessed Lord pronounced in the Gospel; and is a convincing proof of the charity of the Church: shewing that she who is thus solicitous to "convert sinners from the error of their way, and to save their souls from death," is a worthy minister of the Gospel of Him, who came into the world to "call sinners to repentance," and to "seek and to save that which was lost."

Enough, I trust, will now have been said, to vindicate the character of our excellent Church in the particular under consideration: and to prove that she is not only exempt from all reasonable imputation of impiety and uncharitableness; to which allusion was made in the introduction to this Discourse; but is justly intitled to our affection and commendation for the opposite qualities. If the arguments, which have been now advanced, shall have had the desired effect upon the minds of any of you, my brethren, members of one of the most pure, and scriptural, and Aposto-

lical Churches throughout Christendom ; if any of you, my brethren, shall have found yourselves confirmed by these observations in your former favourable estimate of the provisions of the Church, or relieved from any scruple or doubtfulness concerning their fitness ; I would entreat you in conclusion to consider these reflexions, not only as a justification of her provisions in the particular service now before us, but as an earnest of such arguments as may be pleaded in her favour on other subjects, on which ignorance or prepossession, the inconsiderateness of the ill-informed, or the prejudices of the ill-disposed, may misconceive and misrepresent her. It has been the lot of the Church to make her way, so her Divine Founder hath willed it, "through evil report and good report." Of the latter we trust that she is still esteemed justly intitled to the well-earned meed, in the general estimation of the people of this nation : though of the former she has had to encounter no small portion in the present day, even from persons and in places, where better things might have been hoped and expected. It is only where her provisions are ill-understood or construed amiss, that we need fear any thing that can be said of her or her provisions. Where her character is properly understood, and correctly estimated, we shrink not from examination : for she will be found in other cases, as I trust she has

appeared in this which has now occupied our attention, distinguished for her faithful attachment to scriptural truth, and for her piety, her charity, and withal her careful moderation, in enforcing it.

Thus much has been thought desirable to be said concerning the provision which the Church has made for the service of the first day of Lent, in relation to the Church herself. In relation to ourselves let me observe, that the purposes of this Discourse will by no means have been answered, unless the reflexions, which have been offered upon her intent and her provisions in the service for that day, shall tend to produce in some at least of my hearers the effects, which she is anxious to produce by that service in our hearts and lives. To this end the whole of that service is wonderfully well adapted: not the introduction only, and the sentences, which the tenour of my argument has required me to examine; but the same is the case also with that scriptural, most impressive, and most affecting exhortation, wherein application is made to our consciences of the terrors of God's wrath; with the penitential psalm, in which we are then directed to pour forth the sorrows of a troubled spirit, a broken and contrite heart; and finally with the concluding devotions, in which the congregation, partly by the mouth of the minister, and partly in conjunction with him, make confes-

sion of their own unworthiness, and implore mercy and forgiveness from that gracious God, “whose property is always to have mercy, to whom only it appertaineth to forgive sins.”

But this admirable service, excellent as it is, being but rarely used in our publick devotions, I would advise you to peruse and consider it before you come hither, and to bear your parts in it with attention and fervency, whilst you are here. At the same time, as many of the present congregation will probably be prevented by their secular engagements, and by that general indifference which prevails concerning such services of the Church as are not appropriated to the Lord’s day, from attending the service on the first day of Lent, them let me intreat to suffer one additional word of exhortation; whilst I admonish them to make the provision in question the subject of their private study and meditation in the course of the approaching solemn and penitential season. So may the pious and charitable intent of the Church be fulfilled; and may we all be led to earnest and true repentance, and to walk more warily in these dangerous days! And do thou, “Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent; create and make in us new and contrite hearts: that we worthily lamenting our

sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

## DISCOURSE XX.

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### THE CHURCH'S PLACES OF WORSHIP, GOD'S PRESENCE IN THEM, AND OUR DUTY.

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GEN. xxviii. 16, 17.

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place ; and I knew it not. And he was afraid and said, How dreadful is this place ! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

THE circumstances, immediately connected with this exclamation of the patriarch Jacob, are few, and need not detain us long in the recital. Partly to avoid persecution from his brother Esau, and partly to form a matrimonial engagement more agreeable to the religious privileges which his family enjoyed than his own neighbourhood would furnish, Jacob with the blessing of his father Isaac had quitted their residence in Canaan, and was travelling towards Haran in Mesopotamia whence Abraham had come. On his journey it pleased God to vouchsafe him a mark of his favour, and a promise of his protection in a very memorable vi-

sion, thus recorded in the verses before my text : “And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven : and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac : the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed ; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south : and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land ; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.”

This vision, emblematical probably of Divine providence, which pervades and governs all things, and which especially manifested itself in the covenant of grace, whereby through the Mediation of our great Intercessor an intercourse was opened between earth and heaven, filled the mind of the patriarch with amazement, gratitude, and devotion. This is

signified in my text : for there, as you have already heard, it follows, "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place ; and I knew it not. And he was afraid and said, How dreadful is this place ! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Acts of religious worship, declaratory of his dependence on the Almighty for support, and accompanied with vows of faithful allegiance, ensued upon this exclamation. And he then "went on his journey," exulting doubtless in this testimony of the Divine benevolence, and strengthened in his reliance on the providence, and in his faith on the covenanted mercies, of God.

It is not my intention to enlarge at present on the general narrative before us, but rather to confine your thoughts to the particular exclamation in the text, and thence to take occasion for discoursing on a subject of immediate interest and application to ourselves. I am not fond of ingenious adaptations of scriptural passages to subjects with which they have no natural connexion. But without laying any undue constraint upon the language in my text, it may, I think, be regarded as a just description of the character of those places, which are dedicated to the worship of God ; and perhaps, there are few persons, to whom the very recital of the passage does not at once suggest the application. I shall therefore without longer preface pro-

ceed to the observations, which I propose to build upon the text; and, taking them in the order, wherein it suggests them to my mind, I shall endeavour to show you, first, that "the Lord is in this place," or, in other words, that the presence of God is vouchsafed in an especial manner to places dedicated to his service: secondly, from the acknowledgment of the patriarch, "and I knew it not," I shall insist upon the ignorance which is sometimes manifested of this truth by various particulars in our conduct with respect to the frequenting of places of God's presence: I shall then go on to consider, thirdly, the reverential and devout feelings, with which they ought to be regarded, suggested by the further reflexion, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of GOD:" and lastly I shall direct your thoughts to the very important association, which may be deduced from the concluding words, namely, that the place which "is the house of God" is also "the gate of heaven."

I. Our first purpose is to show, that the presence of God is vouchsafed in a special manner to places dedicated to his service, as suggested by the expression, "Surely the Lord is in this place."

We know indeed that God is in every place; that we can go no whither from his Spirit, which pervadeth all things, and that no space can confine

Him who occupieth and filleth infinity. So that in a strict and proper sense, that is most true which Solomon said, “Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee: how much less this house which I have builded<sup>1</sup>? ” or that which was said by St. Stephen, with reference to Solomon, “Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool; what house will ye build me, saith the Lord? or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things<sup>2</sup>? ”

It is however no less true, that in a certain sense the Most High doth indeed dwell with men on the earth, in temples made with hands. So Solomon asserts in the same prayer at the dedication of his temple, “I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever<sup>3</sup>:” and God Himself is introduced as saying the same in the 132nd Psalm, “The Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it.” And so we read that the Lord testified his presence in the temple of Solomon by a visible mark, as is recorded in the fifth chapter of the second book of Chronicles: “And it came

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. vi. 18.    <sup>2</sup> Acts vii. 48—53.    <sup>3</sup> 2 Chron. vi. 2.

to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place: (for all the priests that were present were sanctified, and did not then wait by course: Also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries, and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets:) It came even to pass, as the trumpeteters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets, and cymbals, and instruments of musick, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God." And again, in the following chapter, in further confirmation of his favour, when Solomon had concluded his prayer of dedication, ending with those beautiful words of the 132nd Psalm, " Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness. O Lord God, turn not away the face of thine anointed; remember the

mercies of David thy servant:”—thereupon ensued that which is related in the commencement of the seventh chapter: namely, “when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord’s house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down; and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.” The Master, as hath been well observed, thus took possession of his house, and for a time dispossessed even his own servants, to show that he did so; thereby declaring that what had been with such solemnity appropriated to his service, it was his pleasure to accept and to bless.

And that He did not intend to neglect it in after times, but that He purposed to vouchsafe to it his peculiar presence, appears from his own subsequent declaration. For, as Moses had long before announced to the Israelites, that the Lord their God should choose out of all their tribes a place to put his name there, which should be in a special sense “his habitation,” and whither they

should come with their religious offerings; so now we find the Lord Himself signifying this his choice to Solomon: "Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place. For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually."

Thus was the presence of God vouchsafed to his people under the old covenant in the place specially dedicated to his service: and accordingly the temple is continually mentioned under the appellations of "the house of God<sup>1</sup>," "the habitation of God's holiness<sup>2</sup>," "the place where his honour dwelleth<sup>3</sup>:" phrases, the propriety of which is recognised by our blessed Saviour, who called the temple expressly "his Father's house<sup>4</sup>." And let us not think that He is less present with us, than He was with Israel: let it not be supposed, that the Christian Church is less favoured than was the Jewish Church, or that we have lost any spiritual privilege by the incarnation of the Son of God. Rather, as the Apostle argues, "if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." And so our blessed Lord, who is one

<sup>1</sup> Ezra v. 15.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chron. xxx. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xxvi. 8.

<sup>4</sup> John ii. 16.

with the Father, hath not failed to declare graciously in general terms, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;" or to promise more particularly to those, whom He hath charged with the ministry of reconciliation by his Gospel, "Io, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world."

II. Thus we may adopt the patriarch's exclamation, "Surely the Lord is in this place :" but must we go on with him, and say, "And I knew it not ?" That such ignorance should be found amongst Christians, ought not certainly to be : that such ignorance does sometimes exist amongst Christians, is to be inferred from various particulars in our conduct with respect to frequenting the places of God's presence. For are we so constant, and punctual, and devout, and persevering, in our attendance in the house of God, as to manifest our sense of his presence ? Or rather do we not, some of us, only by an occasional attendance, others by a late attendance, others by inconsiderate behaviour, and others again by a premature or precipitate departure, give reason to suppose, that though the Lord be surely in this place, yet we know it not ?

Bear with me a little, my brethren, if I remark that in each of these respects the conduct of some persons in all our congregations, (for of those who

never assemble themselves together in the Church for the professed purpose of partaking in our religious services I do not propose to speak;) but of some of those, who do so assemble themselves, the conduct is in several respects hardly consistent with a correct knowledge of the character of the place where they assemble, considered in the light wherein we have been now considering it, as the house and peculiar dwelling place of God.

For let us look at the subject somewhat in detail. Are you only an occasional attendant on the house of God: an attendant, when it suits your convenience, or your pleasure, or your humour, or your fancy, or your curiosity so to be? Doubtless you are not well convinced that the Lord is in this place, that He here visits his people by his Spirit, and that He here confers upon them his grace for the merits and intercession of his Son; or you would not suffer a slight cause to interrupt your attendance, and divert you from enjoying the high and inestimable privilege of being admitted to the presence of the Lord.

But perhaps you are less deficient in frequency than in earliness of attendance: you come perhaps when the sermon is about to be delivered, and you neglect the prayers of the congregation. Surely you cannot know that it is to the prayers of his people that the presence of the Lord is especially pledged.

It was his promise to the Israelites, "Now mine eyes shall be open and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place;" and it is Christ's promise to His disciples, "I say unto you that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name," evidently, as the previous sentence shows, for the purpose of praying, "there am I in the midst of them." We trust indeed that the visitations of God's grace accompany the preaching of his ministers: but still it is by the efficacy of prayer that his grace is to be procured.

But perhaps you do give attendance generally at the prayers of the congregation: you are not careful however to attend before the commencement of the service. Surely then you cannot be well aware of the nature of the service, which by your irregularity you interrupt and disturb: or you would not thus render yourself guilty of rudely breaking in upon the presence of the Supreme Being, graciously listening to the petitions of his creatures; and of thereby drawing off their attention from the matter, and diminishing the earnestness, of their petitions. Nor can you be aware of the particulars of the service which you neglect: or you would not incur the danger of losing God's favour and forgiveness, by omitting to be present

at the congregation's confession of sin, and at the minister's authoritative declaration of pardon to all true penitents and believers.

But perhaps, although present at the service, you do not partake in it; or if you partake in it with your bodily organs, you do not also with your heart and mind. Your body perhaps is disposed in any posture, but that which bespeaks a devout and humble suppliant, the posture of kneeling humbly on your knees during the prayers, and of standing up during the celebration of the praise and glory of God: your eye is wandering about in search of diversion or amusement: your tongue is silent altogether, or engaged in idle conversation with your neighbour, but never uttering a supplication or a prayer, a psalm of praise or a thanksgiving; never making open confession of your sins and unworthiness, or publick profession of your Christian faith; never pronouncing an Amen in confirmation of the prayer which the minister offers in your name and on your behalf: your thoughts are abstracted from all concern about your soul, and fixed on projects of worldly business or worldly pleasure. And is it possible you can know, in whose presence you are more immediately appearing? even in the presence of that all-seeing God, who hath declared that they, whom He seeks to worship Him, are such as "worship him in spirit and in truth;" and that "vain" is the worship of

those "hypocrites," who "draw nigh unto him with their mouth, and honour him with their lips," with the affectation or the semblance of devotion, "while their heart is far from him."

But, perhaps, your failing is of a still different description; consisting of an abrupt and hasty departure from the Lord's house before the service has been altogether completed. You indecently leave the Church in the very midst of the devotions which the congregation is offering to the throne of the heavenly grace, or during the admonitions and exhortations of the preacher: or having waited perhaps till the conclusion of the sermon, instead of then humbling yourself on your knees before God to receive his minister's blessing, you hurry out of the Church with precipitation, to the diminution of God's honour, and to the interruption of your brethren's devotions, and careless withal and thoughtless about your own spiritual welfare. Certainly you need to be informed, that the blessing of God is specially annexed to the blessing thus solemnly pronounced by his minister; according to the promise under the Jewish dispensation to them whom the Lord had "separated to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the Lord:" "They shall put my name," saith God, "upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them<sup>1</sup>:" a promise, which is by

<sup>1</sup> Numb. vi. 27.

analogy equally applicable to the Christian Church, and which has constantly supplied a rule of conduct in all ages of Christianity, especially in the primitive times, when no one ventured to leave the Church till he had received the benediction of the bishop, if present, or, in his absence, of the priest.

There is one other case to which I must advert, as betraying an ignorance in a very large proportion of our congregations, that “the Lord is in this place;” and the rather, because it belongs to many, who are constant, and punctual, and regular, and apparently devout, in their attendance on the general service of the Church. I mean the habitual neglect, which even such persons manifest, of the holy Communion of our Lord’s Supper. This is not the time to enlarge upon the several arguments against that neglect: I must be content with noticing one, resulting from our present subject, sufficient of itself, as it should appear, to bring, by God’s grace, those who are acquainted with it, and will well consider it, to a better mind. The argument, of which I speak, is “the great benefit” arising to those “who, with a true penitent heart and lively faith, receive that holy sacrament: for then,” as the Church states the doctrine of Scripture, “then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood; then we dwell in Christ and Christ in us; then we are one with Christ and Christ with us.” The sacrament of the

Lord's Supper is that special ordinance of the Christian religion, whereby God is in a signal and peculiar manner present with the disciples of his Son. It is the appointed means, whereby not only we testify our communion with Christ and his Church, but Christ Himself also holds communion with us by his Spirit.

I would beg your earnest attention, my brethren, to this momentous subject. And indeed, if in any of the particulars, which have been enumerated, whether by only an occasional attendance in the Lord's house, or by a partial and late attendance, or by carelessness whilst you are here, or by precipitately departing hence, you are conscious of acting in a manner inconsistent with a becoming sense of the Lord's presence in his house, let me entreat you to reflect upon it seriously, bearing with you the encouraging assurance, and the awful denunciation, of the Almighty, "Them that honour me I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed<sup>1</sup>." I have proceeded on the supposition, that the faults which have been noticed arise from ignorance, that "surely God is in this place," or, at least, from a want of due consideration of this solemn truth. Wherever such a cause exists, admonitions like the present may serve perhaps to rouse attention to the sub-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 30.

ject, and to correct in the well-disposed, though sometimes inconsiderate Christian, neglect of some particular of his duty, or indifference in the performance of it. Lying in a state of spiritual slumber, he may, perhaps, by the Divine blessing, be thus awakened out of his sleep; and be led to confess, in the language of the patriarch, "Surely God is in this place; and I knew it not."

III. And so we go on to consider, thirdly, the reverential and devout feelings, with which the places dedicated to God's service ought to be regarded, as suggested by the subsequent reflexion, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God."

Reverence for the house of God is coupled in the law with reverence for the Lord's day, upon the same general principle, that things dedicated to Him should be had in honour on account of Him to whom they are dedicated: therefore it is said, "Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord<sup>1</sup>." And such respect of God's sanctuary was expressly recognized and enforced by our blessed Saviour, when He severely condemned the profanation of the temple, and asserted the holiness of its character.

With *rererence* for the house of God we should

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xix. 30.

also cherish *affection* for it, leading to a cheerful observance of its services, according to those sayings in the psalms, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth." "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee." For he, who seriously reflects on the truth already established, namely, that God is more immediately present in places dedicated to his service, will consider it his highest privilege and happiness to be admitted there, and so to be blessed in the enjoyment of communion with that Being, of whom it may be truly said, that, as in his presence there is fulness of joy in heaven, so in his presence upon earth there is the greatest foretaste of heavenly happiness.

To speak summarily, these two feelings of reverence and affection comprise all which we may be required to cherish towards the house of God. And, acting under the influence of these, we shall feel powerful motives to the performance of our duty with regard to God's publick service. They

will prompt us to be constant in our attendance on the Lord's house ; for we shall not willingly absent ourselves from that place which we indeed love, to which we are really and sincerely attached ; and our attendance upon which is at the same time an act of honour towards the Almighty. They will prompt us to be present and to participate in all the services of the sanctuary, whether prayer, or confession, or praise, or thanksgiving ; because love for the place where God's honour dwelleth naturally carries with it love for the religious performances, to all and each of which the visitations of his grace are promised ; and because it is incompatible with any sincere respect, to be admitted into God's presence in his sanctuary, and then to behave towards Him with indifference and neglect. They will moreover prompt us to be sincere and fervent in these our religious duties : because love for the habitation of God's house cannot subsist without love for the Being who inhabits it, and reverence for his sanctuary must be founded on our sense of the perfections of Him who sanctifies it ; and surely it is impossible for any one to love and reverence God, and not to be at the same time desirous of paying Him the poor but hearty tribute of his adoration, and of worshipping Him in spirit and in truth. Thus under the influence of these feelings, the house of God is made to bear its just and appropriate character ; being, as our Saviour

describes it in the words of the prophet Isaiah, "the house of prayer<sup>1</sup>;" of fervent effectual prayer. And in such cases the vision of the patriarch appears in some sort to be perpetuated and realized to us, agreeably to the application made of it by our blessed Redeemer. The eye of faith "sees heaven open :" and the angels of God, continually "sent forth" from God's presence "to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation<sup>2</sup>," appear "ascending and descending<sup>3</sup>," in execution of the purposes of his providence, and for the safeguard and welfare of his people.

IV. And this leads me to remark in the last place the association which may be deduced from the concluding words of the Patriarch; for the same place, which is "the house of God," is also "the gate of heaven :" it is the avenue, through which the Almighty conveys his blessings and grace to his people, and through which he conducts his people to his own heavenly abode.

There are not any means of grace, whereby God hath declared that He will be with us and bless us, but they are provided for our edification in that branch of the Church of Christ, to which we, my brethren, have the happiness of belonging ; and they

<sup>1</sup> Is. lvi. 7. Matt. xxi. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. i. 14.

<sup>3</sup> John i. 51.

are continually administered for the comfort and improvement of us all. Hers are “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks,” conceived in the spirit and after the measure of the purest times of Christianity, and such as to warrant a well grounded belief and persuasion, that where they are faithfully uttered in a congregation of Christians, there is Christ in the midst of them. Hers are benedictions comprised in words, originally prescribed by God Himself or proceeding from his inspired Apostles, justifying us in the conviction, that where they are faithfully and devoutly received by a Christian assembly, they are accompanied by the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The sacraments of our Lord Jesus Christ are hers, ordained by Christ Himself as means whereby we may receive his inward and spiritual grace, and as pledges to assure us of the reception of it; and we doubt not that those, who worthily receive them, are thereby grafted into the body of Christ's Church, and made partakers of his Spirit; and that they thereby dwell in Christ, and Christ in them. And all these prayers, and benedictions, and sacraments are administered by a duly constituted priesthood, deriving their office and authority in uninterrupted succession from those primitive ministers of the Christian faith, to whom Christ gave his commission that they should preach the Gospel to every crea-

ture; accompanying his commission with the promise, "Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world."

Thus is the Church the avenue, through which grace is sent down from heaven; and so in consequence it is the avenue, through which men are advanced to the same place: for present grace is furnished to us in order to our future glory. "In my Father's house," saith Christ, "are many mansions<sup>1.</sup>" Thither He is gone to prepare a place for his faithful followers, for those who "abide in him"<sup>2</sup> during their earthly pilgrimage, and adhere to the method of salvation which He hath provided and prescribed: and at the end of the world He "will come again, and receive them unto himself, that where he is, there they may be also." And as He hath elsewhere told us, they who now "dwell in him, and he in them<sup>3,</sup>" by virtue of that Spirit which He now communicates to the devout members of his Church, they "have eternal life, and he will raise them up at the last day<sup>4.</sup>"

The observations proposed for our employment have now been sufficiently considered. The conclusion from them shall be brief. Seeing then

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 2, 3.

<sup>3</sup> John vi. 56.

<sup>2</sup> John xv. 4.

<sup>4</sup> John vi. 40.

that of the Church it may be said in the language of the patriarch Jacob, “Surely the Lord is in this place;” seeing of the Church it may be said, “How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven;” let us not act as men who “know it not;” but let us act in a manner conformable to our knowledge of so interesting and important a truth. Let us not “forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is<sup>1</sup>;” let us not, as is the manner of others, assemble ourselves inconstantly and interruptedly: neither let us be dilatory in coming, nor precipitate in departing, nor irreverent and inanimate whilst we are here. But let us to a conviction of what is right add constancy in performing it; and to constancy diligence, and to diligence perseverance, and to perseverance humility of deportment, and fervency of spirit, and sincerity and integrity of heart. “Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way<sup>2</sup>. ” Better means of “serving God acceptably with reverence and godly fear<sup>3</sup>” no Church ever possessed, than such as are possessed by the Church of this kingdom. Let us live in the conscientious practice of these means,

<sup>1</sup> Heb. x. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xii. 12, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. xii. 28.

and we may take to ourselves the language of the Lord to the patriarch, "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest." Our attendance in this house of God will be a perpetual source to us of consolation and enjoyment: nor will He leave us nor forsake us, until through this "gate of heaven" He shall have conducted us into his celestial abode; even into that presence of his, where there "is fulness of joy;" where we shall be "abundantly satisfied with the plenteousness of his house, and he shall make us drink of the river of his pleasures."

I shall conclude with one of the Collects of the Liturgy. O Lord, we beseech thee to keep thy Church and household continually in thy true religion; that they who do lean only upon the hope of thy heavenly grace may evermore be defended by thy mighty power; through Jesus Christ our Lord: to whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Collect for the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany.

## DISCOURSE XXI.

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### THE CHURCH'S HOLY PLACES, THEIR DIGNITY, ORIGIN, AND USES.

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#### PSALM CXXII. 1.

I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house  
of the Lord.

THE Author of this Psalm was David; for so we are informed by the title prefixed to it, which calls it "a song of degrees or of ascensions;" meaning probably one that was sung, when the Israelites came up to worship in Jerusalem at the annual festivals. The subject of it is the joy which they felt, as they ascended in companies to the city, at that time ordained by Divine appointment for the publick worship of the Lord: and "the house of the Lord" denotes the particular place where his worship was celebrated, as being that where He promised to be specially present. For, as heaven is called his dwelling place, because He there

most conspicuously manifests his glory, so the name is transferred to places upon earth distinguished also for a more than ordinary revelation of his Divine perfections. Thus the tabernacle, at first, constructed at the Divine appointment by Moses, for holding the ark of the testimony which the Lord gave him, over which the glory of the Lord was seen, was called the Lord's house or dwelling-place<sup>1</sup>. And afterwards the temple, built by Solomon on Mount Sion, succeeding to the custody of the ark, succeeded also to the appellation<sup>2</sup> of the house or dwelling-place of the Lord: an appellation, which was notoriously given to it, not only by the inspired writers of the Old Testament, but by our blessed Saviour Himself in the New.

To this place of the Lord's peculiar presence all the men of Israel were required to go, at least three times in every year, from the remotest quarters of the land. And it is generally supposed that the psalm before us was composed for those occasions: in order that the people might therein express their satisfaction and delight during that holy journey, saying or singing to each other as they went, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxv. 8. 16.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chron. v. 2. vi. 2.

is built as a city, that is at unity in itself: for thither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord: to testify unto Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord."

But the psalm, though probably composed for this solemn occasion in particular, was no less adapted to the general use of the devout Israelite; who, enjoying from proximity of residence more frequent opportunities of visiting the place of God's dwelling, failed not to profit continually by those opportunities of worshipping the Lord in his appointed place, and there soliciting his blessing. To a person thus circumstanced, perpetual occasions must have arisen for uttering the Psalmist's exclamation, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." And to the devout Christian at the present time, as to the devout Israelite in times of old, the application and use of the words are obvious: expressive, as they are, of that sentiment, which at all times animates the hearts of those who love the Lord in sincerity, and are studious of promoting his honour by a publick profession of his service.

It is true, that we have no such outward signs of the special presence of God in our churches, as the Israelites had of old in their tabernacle and temple. Still we cannot reasonably doubt, that He is as specially present with us in the places dedicated to his service, as He was with them. It

is our blessed Lord's own most gracious promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them<sup>1</sup>." And it is the purport of the promise, that He doth not now dignify with his presence only one chosen place, as He did under the legal dispensation: but that in whatever place, under the dispensation of the Gospel, his faithful people meet together in his name to worship Him and serve Him, there He is with them, to assist them in their services, and to bless and sanctify the meeting to their good. Every such place therefore, dedicated to God's worship under the Gospel, in a manner agreeable to his own ordinances, may as properly be called "the House of the Lord," as the tabernacle or the temple was under the law. And every devout Christian may as reasonably feel delight in attending the service of the sanctuary, as did the Author of the pious and beautiful effusion before us: and may as correctly give vent to his feelings in the language of the text, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

Whatever indeed may have been the peculiar circumstances of the world, which caused the Israelites to be distinguished by special religious ordinances, and promises of special superintendence, the Christian's obligations with respect to

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 20.

the calls of solemn devotion in places set apart for God's worship, and his encouragements and causes of religious gladness in obeying, are enforced by considerations equally plain and strong as those by which the Israelite was actuated; especially by reason of the origin, as well as dignity, of such places, and the uses which they are intended to serve.

I. Meditation on the relation which we bear to our Creator, and on the faculties with which He has created us; as well as the plain instruction to be derived from the word of God Himself; must convince us, that worship is a duty, which we at all times owe, and which we ought at all times humbly to perform towards Him: praying to Him continually and without ceasing; giving thanks to Him always for all things; blessing the Lord at all times, and having his praise continually in our mouths. But, as this is a duty which we owe at all times, so is it one which we ought most chiefly to perform, by assembling and meeting together in places appropriated for that purpose. The duty of publick worship in the assemblies of those who hold a common faith in God is an act of honour due to the Great Author and Preserver of all: an act of our belief in his perfections, and of our acknowledgment of dependence upon Him.

Accordingly, the institution and use of such

publick assemblies have been an integral part of the revelation of God's will to mankind; and from the beginning publick places were set apart with his sanction for the holding of religious assemblies. It began not with that tabernacle or ambulatory temple, which Moses caused to be made by God's appointment at Mount Sinai; but is to be traced in the more ancient usage of the most illustrious servants of God.

As it is probable that Adam, even during the space of his short continuance in paradise, had a set place where to present himself before the Lord<sup>1</sup>; so it is evident, that Adam's sons had out of paradise in like manner places whither to bring their sacrifices<sup>2</sup>. Noah builded an altar to the Lord as soon as he came out of the ark<sup>3</sup>. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, wheresoever they pitched their tents, erected places for Divine worship, that is, altars with their fences and enclosures, without any special appointment from God<sup>4</sup>. Nay, Moses himself, before that glorious tabernacle with the ark of the testimony was yet made, pitched a tabernacle without the camp, "whither every one that sought the Lord was to go<sup>5</sup>:" thus providing an appropriate place for the publick worship of God.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. iv. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. viii. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. xii. 7; xiii. 4. 18; xxvi. 25; xxxv. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Exod. xxxiii. 7.

When, however, it pleased Almighty God to ordain special rules for the guidance of his chosen people, the tabernacle first, and then the temple of the Israelites, were consecrated for that purpose. Thither they were commanded to repair, for making their confessions and oblations, and performing their various acts of Divine worship. This first house of God, however, having been overthrown, a second of inferior indeed, but still of commanding beauty, was erected in its stead. Besides which temple, both in other parts of the land, and even in Jerusalem, there were in process of time numerous synagogues built for the religious resort of the people.

These places of assembling, and these exercises of publick worship, our blessed Lord and his Apostles sanctioned by their practice and their participation. And when the Jewish religion, and therewith the temple of Jerusalem were about to be abolished, the same principle of holding publick religious assemblies, and of appropriating to them particular places, was recognised and adopted by the inspired teachers of the new religion. In the Acts of the Apostles are to be discerned more than probable footsteps of some determinate and peculiar places for their solemn meetings: places, known even then by the name of "Churches," in opposition to the ordinary dwelling houses: places, set apart for the purposes of celebrating the holy

Communion of the Lord's Supper, of uniting in the other acts of holy worship, and of preaching the word of God: places indeed, not emulating those goodly and stately structures, which the Church possessed after the empire became Christian, and which we now, by God's blessing, enjoy; but such as the state and circumstances of the times would permit; at first, perhaps, some capacious and convenient room within the walls or dwelling of some pious disciple, dedicated by the religious bounty of the owner to the use of his brother Christians, and the honour and worship of the Lord.

Thus it has been shown with great probability by learned men, reasoning from the authority of the ancients, that the Apostles always met together for prayer and supplication in a certain place upon Mount Sion, which was "the upper room" so often mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, and which was afterwards inclosed with a goodly Church: that this was "the house," mentioned in the forty-sixth verse of the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, agreeably to our marginal translation, where the Apostles continued "breaking bread," or celebrating the holy Communion after their return from the temple, and where the assembly was used to meet together: that in the eleventh chapter of St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, "the church of God," there used in

distinction from the private “houses” of the Corinthians, denotes the place set apart for sacred duties: and that such places are to be understood in all those salutations of St. Paul in his several epistles to the Romans, the first to the Corinthians, to the Colossians, and to Philemon, wherein he speaks of “the church in the house” respectively, of Aquila and Priscilla, of Nymphas, and of Philemon; intending by that phrase the congregation that met in the house of such pious Christian, as had bestowed some part of his dwelling to be an oratory for the assembly of the Church. This interpretation, resting upon various ancient authorities, of the foregoing scriptural passages, is confirmed both by heathen allusions and by ecclesiastical traditions: most powerfully it is confirmed by St. Clement of Rome, the contemporary and fellow labourer of St. Paul, who affirms, “that God has ordained as well appropriate places where, as appropriate times and persons when and whereby, he would be solemnly served, that all things might be done religiously and in order.”

In places such as these the primitive Christians appear to have assembled for the celebration of their religious rites. Indeed the fact of their assembling necessarily presupposes a place of assembly: a place sufficiently capacious for the reception of those who were to join in the same religious offices, and sufficiently notorious to allow of the

different persons meeting together from various quarters at the same spot. But the fact of their so assembling is manifest beyond all controversy. It is the very first incident recorded of the infant Church after her Lord's departure: nor is there any particular, which more distinctly marks its character in the succeeding periods of its early life. From the scanty records of its history preserved to us in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, Jerusalem and Damascus, Cæsarea and Antioch, Troas and Miletus, Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome, may be adduced as exhibiting the delightful prospect of Christians uniting together in the service and adoration of their Lord.

The practice, which from incidental notices appears to have been established in these particular cities, was no doubt general among the early professors of the Gospel. And this they did so constantly, even in the days of the bitterest persecution, that Pliny, a heathen magistrate, writing within a few years after the death of the Apostle St. John to the emperor Trajan, for directions how to proceed in punishing the Christians, describes them by their custom of holding congregations on a stated day to worship Christ, and bind themselves by a sacrament, or oath, to commit no wickedness. And about forty years after him, Justin Martyr, so called from having suffered martyrdom in behalf of his faith, in a defence of the Christians when per-

secuted by another heathen emperor, the first of the Antonines, records their regular religious assemblies, in words, from which the following description is somewhat abridged: “On the day called Sunday, all of us, whether we live in the city or the country, meet together in one place: where the memoirs of the Apostles and the writings of the Prophets are read; an exhortation to live suitably to them is made by the president of the assembly; and we then rise together and offer up our joint prayers. Then bread and wine is brought: and after repeated prayers and praises by the president, to which the people answer, Amen, it is distributed throughout the congregation; and alms are collected, and left in the President’s hands, for the use of the poor.”

In these particulars of the religious services of the early Christians you will readily recognise the pattern of the services, which at this day distinguish our apostolical Church. But to this resemblance I can do no more than transiently advert. It is rather a part of my immediate subject to remark, that this duty of assembling for publick worship, practised by the primitive professors of our Christian faith, was not left to their own sense of propriety alone, or to inferences derived from the common feelings of mankind, or from aboriginal tradition, or from the precepts of God under his former dispensation, obligatory as those precepts

might have been considered, unless formally abrogated by the laws of the new faith: but it was a duty expressly imposed upon them by the dictates of the inspired ministers of the Lord. Together with the example of the Apostles was combined the Apostolical precept, "not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some was<sup>1</sup>:" a precept, which appears to have assumed the general prevalence of the practice amongst the professors of the Gospel; and whilst it positively enjoined the duty of associating with the religious assemblies of their brethren, conveyed an expressive animadversion and censure on those who were wilfully absent.

II. Thus an attendance on the publick worship of Almighty God in holy places is obligatory on all Christians. Let us consider whether they have not encouragement to practise it, in the causes of gladness which accompany the going into the house of the Lord, arising out of the uses, to which their going thither may be made conducive.

First then a source of gladness is found in the reflexion, that we are thus engaged in performing a duty to God. "Our rejoicing," as the Apostle says, "is this, the testimony of our conscience<sup>2</sup>." The consciousness of doing that, which we are

<sup>1</sup> Heb. x. 25.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. i. 12.

reasonably persuaded we ought to do, is always a gratifying sensation to the considerate mind : it is a sensation by God's will inherent in our nature; and is, as it were, the voice of God Himself, intimating his approval of our conduct, and by his commendation encouraging us to proceed.

It is a source of gladness also to reflect, that the duty in which we are thus engaged is one, whereby we follow the footsteps of the holy men of God who have gone before us, of the patriarchs and the prophets, the apostles and the martyrs of ancient times ; a "cloud" of illustrious "witnesses," who "compass us about" in imagination, and animate us by the beauty of their example to devotion in the house and service of God.

It is a source of gladness also to bear in mind, that this duty is a commencement here, of similar occupations in that future state, which is the object of our liveliest aspirations ; for of that state it will be one of the chief, and most glorious, and most delightful employments, to serve God continually with "the spirits of just men made perfect, the general assembly and Church of the first-born that are written in heaven," and with "an innumerable company of angels<sup>1</sup>."

It is a source of gladness also to consider, that meanwhile we are associated here on earth in our

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 22, 23.

devotions with those, with whom we shall be most delighted to resume the same heavenly employment: that with them, with whom we are now connected by life's most endearing charities, we are “taking sweet counsel together, and walking in the house of God as friends<sup>1</sup>. ”

And may we not esteem it an additional source of gladness, that we have unseen witnesses and partakers of our adorations in some of those “ ministering spirits<sup>2</sup>, ” who “ fill the heavenly temple of the Lord<sup>3</sup>; ” and are “ continually crying one to another,” and celebrating his praises in hymns of glory, which the Church takes for her pattern upon earth?

But more abundant than all this is the source of gladness springing from the consideration, that in the house of the Lord the Lord Himself is peculiarly present with his faithful worshippers: that as He promised to the Israelitish Church of old, “In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee<sup>4</sup>, ” (and surely he must be believed to “record his name” in those places, where by his own appointment his name is continually commemorated in the solemn offices of his holy religion,) so He will continually in such places “come” to his assembled servants, and “will

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxxi. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Is. vi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. i. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Exod. xx. 24.

bless them ;”—that, as He promised to the first members of the Christian Church, “ Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them <sup>1</sup>,” so his presence may ever be confidently expected “ in the midst of those,” who are “ gathered together,” and offer “ in his name” their devotions in his Father’s house;—that as He promised his Apostles, the first ministers of the Gospel, “ Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world <sup>2</sup>,” so He may be at all times assuredly presumed to “ be with” their legitimate successors in their ministrations for the benefit of his Church;—that as He appointed his own ordinances for the observance of his people, and annexed to them the promise of corresponding blessings, so He must be regarded as ever at hand, to confirm his promise and bestow his blessing upon those, who wait upon Him in his house, by prayer, by praises, by hearing his holy word, by partaking of his holy sacraments, in short by his own several appointed means of grace. Thus whether we have regard to the memorial of his name in his sanctuary, or to the gathering together of his people in his name, or to the commission of his ministers, or to the grace of his holy institutions, we have reason to be assured that the presence of the Lord Himself, and together with that

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxviii. 20.

all needful blessings, are vouchsafed in his house to his faithful worshippers. And what more powerful motive can we have for resorting to the place, where his presence is thus vouchsafed ; and adopting the profession of the holy Psalmist, “ I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord ?”

But together with these considerations, the very character of the house of God, and still more the celebration of those rites which are administered in it, are calculated in their administration to be productive of the most heartfelt comfort and substantial joy. The promise of God is given by his prophet Isaiah to those who love his name, and faithfully serve Him. “ Them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer<sup>1.</sup>” Joyfulness, you see, is thus promised to those who frequent the house of God, here described with reference to one of the principal duties for which it is intended, namely, as “ his house of prayer.” And the promise doubtless is fulfilled, and many of you, my brethren, I trust can bear witness to the fulfilment, by the operation of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of those, who seek with diligence the places dedicated to his service, and devoutly join in the services there celebrated in his honour, according to the rites

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lvi. 7.

and ceremonies of our scriptural and Apostolical Church.

It is a wise, a salutary, and a laudable provision of the Church's discipline, that she sets apart, and consecrates by solemn religious rites to God's glory, the places which she intends for his worship: and by outward signs of decency and reverence, of majesty and holiness, impresses them with an appropriate character, which, whilst it redounds to the honour of God, operates also with no mean or trivial influence on the minds of his people. Connected with this character, and in some degree generated by it, together with an awful veneration for the great Proprietor, a certain secret sense of serene and holy pleasure is diffused over the pious and meditative mind, as soon as the feet cross the threshold, which separates the house of God from common places. We feel with delight that we are on "holy ground;" and a still small voice within, as we draw near to "worship God in the beauty of holiness<sup>1</sup>," answers in the words of the Apostle at the sight of "the excellent glory<sup>2</sup>," "It is good for us to be here<sup>3</sup>."

But the pleasure thus imparted by the mere character of the building, is only a foretaste of that higher enjoyment which is experienced by the devout mind on the celebration of the ensuing

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xcvi. 9.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Pet. i. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xvii. 4.

service. Excellently adapted indeed to such an end are the liturgical provisions of the Church; and a careful consideration of them will suggest to your minds manifold occasions of religious gladness. We must not venture here upon a prolonged examination of these provisions. Yet I would fain direct your thoughts into a train of observation, which you may prosecute at leisure; and thence be thoroughly convinced of the tendency of our services to produce joyfulness in those who faithfully partake them.

With this view I would first direct your attention to those *sentences* of holy Scripture, which begin the Church's Order for Morning and Evening Prayer, gladdening all faithful hearts by an assurance, from God's own word, of his mercy and forgiveness to confessing, penitent, and converted sinners. For further example and proof of the same gladdening influence, I would call to your recollection that solemn *declaration*, which, after an humble *confession* of sins by the congregation, is pronounced by the minister, in the name and by the authority of Almighty God, that "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel."

I would go on to specify the various forms of *prayer*, wherein the congregation then proceed to address themselves to God: now joining with the minister in a common utterance of the Lord's

Prayer, and now expressing their assent to the several petitions and supplications of the minister: thus "coming boldly," as the Apostle says, "to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need<sup>1</sup>;" still looking up with faith to the Almighty Creator of the world, as their most gracious and merciful Father, and still grounding their hopes of acceptance on the merits and intercession of his Son, their only Redeemer and Propitiation, their only Mediator and Advocate; always therefore having reason for joy in being assured that "their desires and petitions will be fulfilled," as shall be "most expedient for them."

I would instance further the provisions of the Church for that delightful office of rendering *thanks* to God for the great benefits already received at his hands; whether incidentally in the course of our Order of daily Prayer; or more formally in the General Thanksgiving, "for all his goodness and lovingkindness to us and to all men; for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but, above all, for his inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory:" or again in the Order of the Holy Communion, wherein we gratefully com-

<sup>1</sup> Heb. iv. 16.

memorate the death of our Redeemer, acknowledging it to be “meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty Everlasting God.”

I would particularize again the kindred festive provisions of the Church for “setting forth God’s most worthy *praise* ;” whether in the Psalms or Hymns, wherein we celebrate the perfections of God as manifested by his works of creation, or more especially by the redemption of mankind and the blessings of the Gospel covenant, concluding each with ascribing glory to the God of our salvation, “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.” Add to these a further commemoration of the Divine Majesty by a recital of the Creeds or Confessions of our Christian faith, in acknowledgment of the glory of the Eternal Trinity, and specially of the wonderful things done for us by the Son of God. Add besides a similar commemoration in the Order of the Holy Communion, which is indeed one Doxology, one continual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God.

I would moreover call in witness the provisions of the Church for our always hearing, “sweeter as it is than honey and the honeycomb<sup>1</sup>,” some part of “God’s most holy *word* :” that word, which is

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xix. 10.

able to make us “wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus<sup>1</sup>;” that word, which being received with meekness, and obeyed with faithfulness, is “able to save our souls<sup>2</sup>;” that word, which is designed to fill us “with patience, comfort, and hope; with joy and peace in believing<sup>3</sup>;” that word, the efficacy of which is never more sensibly experienced, than when it is delivered in his own house, and in his name, and by an officer of his own appointment, and in the assembly of his people, with his own presence in the midst of them, co-operating by his Holy Spirit with his word, that it may “work effectually in them that believe<sup>4</sup>. ”

Lastly, I would bring forward in further evidence the provisions of the Church for dismissing her congregations in peace and joy with “the name of God upon them<sup>5</sup>:” whether in the words of the Apostolical *benediction* of “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost,” at the end of the Morning and Evening Prayer; or in words of equivalent force at the end of the Communion Service, where in scriptural phrase the minister of God lets the people depart with a blessing, by solemnly invoking upon them “The peace of God which passeth all understanding,” “the blessing of

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 15.      <sup>2</sup> Jam. i. 21.      <sup>3</sup> Rom. xv. 4. 13.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 13.      <sup>5</sup> Numb. vi. 27.

God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

But I must be contented at present with this brief and cursory reference to the several departments of our publick worship. Ponder them, I pray you, in your private retirement: examine, with an eye to the subject before us, the Church's introductory sentences, her Confession and Absolution, her prayers, her praises, her thanksgivings, her scriptural instructions, her benedictions; and you will see ample reason for being convinced how well adapted are her provisions, from the beginning of her services to the end, for filling the devout worshipper with comfort and delight; for making us "joyful in God's house of prayer;" for making us "glad when they say unto us, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

I have thus endeavoured to set before you, my brethren, first, the duty of "going into the house of the Lord" for publick worship, after the general example of the saints of God; and then our encouragement for going thither suggested by several causes of gladness connected with the uses of that holy place. And it would be pleasant to me to suppose, that the hearts and minds of all this congregation have gone along with me, so that the examination may be productive of answerable fruits.

Blest as the members of our Communion in this age and country for the most part are,—(I am well aware indeed that in some particular cases that blessing is not enjoyed so universally as we may desire ; and greatly indeed is it to be wished and prayed, that the Spirit of the Lord were poured out abundantly on the people of this kingdom, so that by his blessing a more ample provision could be made for the worship of Almighty God in his own house :)—however, blest as we comparatively and in a great measure are with opportunities of uniting in publick worship in the house of God, we are hardly sensible of the unspeakable and inestimable amount of the blessing : and we are apt perhaps to consider the attendance on God's house and worship, as a burden to be borne, rather than as a benefit to be rejoiced in ; as a sacrifice of time which might be more agreeably devoted to our worldly business or our worldly pleasure ; as a demand in which we acquiesce for the sake of keeping up a decent appearance of religion, rather than as the voluntary exercise of a privilege, and a mean of contributing to our highest advantage and delight.

Is there any one here to whom this observation is applicable, and who hears with indifference perhaps and listlessness, perhaps with distrust and contempt, the lively effusion of the Psalmist's joy, “ I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go

into the house of the Lord?" Let him place himself by imagination in the situation of probably the same Psalmist, an exile in the remotest borders of Judea, far from the dwelling-place and publick worship of God, estranged from the enjoyment of God's presence, and under an earnest sense of spiritual drought and destitution pouring forth his feelings as in the 42nd Psalm, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" And again, in the 84th Psalm, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Let him place himself in the situation of the Jews during their seventy years of captivity in Babylon, when they were deprived of the appointed publick worship of God by the ruin of their temple: and let him estimate the value of the privilege which they had lost by the joy with which they contemplated its approaching restoration: for then, as Ezra records the occurrence, "When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David, king of Israel. And they sang together by course, in

praising and giving thanks unto the Lord, because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. . . . And many shouted aloud for joy." Let him place himself in the situation of the early Christians in those seasons of persecution, which made havock of the infant Church; when the believers could not meet together, to adore the great God of the universe and his Son our Lord Jesus Christ, without braving the terrors of imperial power, and subjecting themselves to the tremendous alternative, of being compelled to "revile the name of Christ," and to join in invocations of the heathen deities, and in sacrifices to their idols, or of being dragged away to a violent and cruel death. Let him place himself in the situation of many of his own countrymen, who in later times have been precluded from assembling themselves together, and uniting in the publick worship of their Creator and Redeemer, by sanguinary prohibitions, and have been no otherwise able to assemble but privately and by stealth, and at the risk of their property, their liberty, and their lives. Let him place himself in the situation of many even at the present day, whom hard necessity may have driven to the remote regions of the earth, and caused to take up their abode in a condition of abandon-

ment and seclusion, where no house of God is seen to invite together at holy seasons the scattered flock of Christ; no voice is heard of God's ministers crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God." Nay, let him place himself in the situation of many of his own countrymen in his own country, who dwelling either far off in the desert, or amidst an overflowing population, are by the distance, or the paucity, or the insufficient capacity, of "the houses of God in our land," constrained either to pass their day of rest in destitution of the publick rites of religion, or to seek them amid the corruptions of an idolatrous and superstitious Church, or the imperfections of unlawful ministrations. Let the careless and lukewarm worshipper, I say; nay, my brethren, let any and all of us place ourselves by imagination in some such situations as these: and we shall thereby be all of us better prepared to prize, as it deserves, the invaluable blessing of an uninterrupted approach to the Lord's house, and of undisturbed opportunities of uniting in his worship; and to utter with heart, as well as with voice, the joyful exclamations of the Psalmist, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." "O come let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation. Let us come before his

presence with thanksgiving, and shew ourselves glad in him with psalms."

To the religious mind indeed the places, which are called after God's name, are above all other places upon earth those wherein true joy is to be found. There is a something in the very atmosphere of those hallowed places, which breathes a calm and holy delight over such a mind: and the Spirit of God imparts to it, in the celebration of his own ordinances and by their means, a peace and a gladness which the world cannot give. But for the perception of this enjoyment the qualification of a religiously disposed mind is requisite. In order then that you, my brethren, may be qualified to perceive it, I would briefly admonish you, in conclusion, to cherish, under the grace of God, which, if earnestly sought, will be mercifully given, a spirit of conscientious and hearty devotion to his service. And for that purpose, whenever you come into "the house of the Lord," come, I pray you, as those who are persuaded that it is really "the Lord's house," into which they are come, and that it behoves them to "reverence his sanctuary<sup>1</sup>," and to "love the habitation of his house, and the place where his honour dwelleth<sup>2</sup>." Come as those who believe, that it is a holy "work, which he there giveth them to do<sup>3</sup>," even, like their blessed

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xix. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Psal. xxvi. 8.

<sup>3</sup> John xvii. 4.

Saviour, to “glorify him on the earth;” and that the better they perform that work, the better qualified they will be to join the society of his angels in heaven, the more “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light<sup>1.</sup>” Come as those who are assured, that the Lord Himself is present in the midst of them, prepared to prosper the devotions of those “true worshippers,” who “worship him in spirit and in truth<sup>2.</sup>” Come then on the whole prepared to address yourselves to the throne of grace with unfeigned faith and true repentance ; with confessions, and prayers, and praises, and thanksgivings, fervently poured forth from sincere hearts ; with submissive attention to God’s holy word, and a humble and steadfast confidence in his blessing. By such a zealous devotion of your hearts and minds to the holy and spiritual duties of this sacred place, you will be more and more “glad when they say unto you, Let us go into the house of the Lord :” and you will be more and more prepared to have your “feet stand in the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem ;” even in the eternal dwelling place and sanctuary of Him, “in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore<sup>3.</sup>”

Now unto the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three Persons, one God, be ascribed, in all Churches

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 12.

<sup>2</sup> John iv. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm xvi. 11.

of the saints, all honour, power, and praise, might, majesty, and dominion, henceforth and for ever. Amen.

O most glorious Lord God, receive the prayers and intercessions of us, and of all others thy servants, who enter into thy house and call upon thee; and give to all of us grace, that we may prepare our hearts to serve ~~thee~~ with reverence and godly fear. Affect us with an awful apprehension of thy heavenly Majesty, and with a deep sense of our own unworthiness: that so, approaching thy sanctuary with lowliness and devotion, and appearing before Thee with clean thoughts and pure hearts, with bodies undefiled and minds sanctified, we may be living temples, holy and acceptable in thy sight, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Consecration of Churches.

THE END.





